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## A RAND NOTE

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### MANAGING THE STRATEGIC TRIANGLE: SUMMARY OF A WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

Norman D. Levin, Jonathan D. Pollack

April 1984

N-2125-USDP

Prepared for

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense  
for Policy

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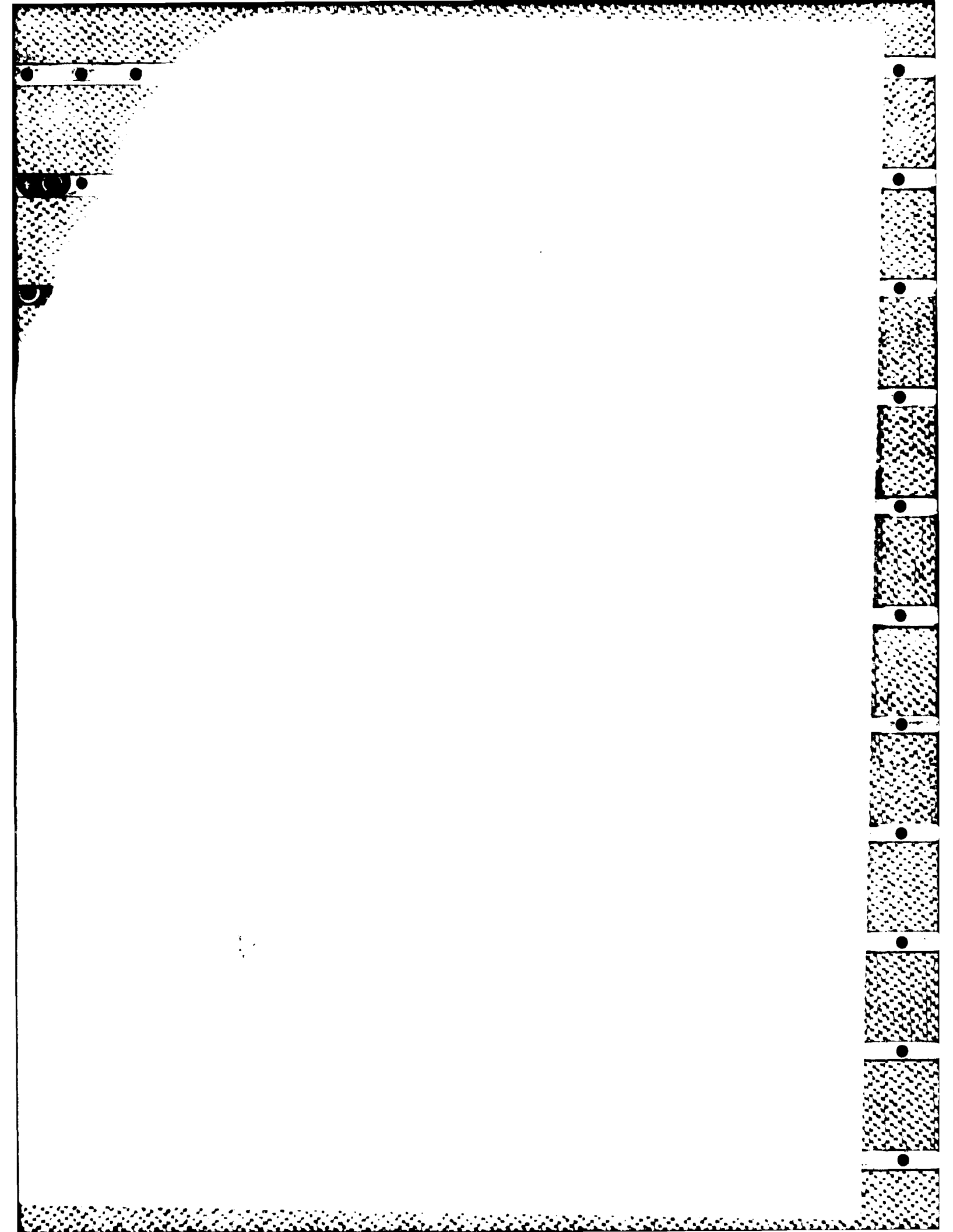
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## PREFACE

In May 1983, The Rand Corporation convened a two-day workshop to explore a broad range of conceptual and practical issues associated with U.S. policies toward the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China and the interactions of these policies within the U.S.-USSR-PRC "strategic triangle." The workshop was sponsored by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and was attended by thirty-five senior government officials and academic foreign-policy specialists. The timing of the session reflected interest in the significance for U.S. foreign policy of then-current discussions between Moscow and Beijing on the possible normalization of Sino-Soviet relations.

This Note summarizes the main issues discussed at the workshop. It reveals not only considerable difference of views about the value of the "strategic triangle" concept to U.S. policy planners, but also great uncertainty about whether and how to relate America's China policy to U.S. dealings with the Soviet Union. There was general agreement that U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union and China must each be cast in basically bilateral terms and that an excessively manipulative approach to managing great-power relations can easily backfire; but at the same time, it was recognized that U.S. policies toward each nation influence in some measure the actions of the other, whether we intend it or not. In this sense, there is a certain "triangularity," irrespective of the intentions of the policymaker. An awareness of the ways in which great-power relationships interact, therefore, is essential to effective policymaking and implementation.

The workshop discussion reflects the experience of the United States in the nearly 15-year period since the inception of the effort to normalize relations with China, when "triangular politics" became part of America's international-affairs vocabulary. The discussion demonstrates that there is still no clear consensus on how to conduct interactive relations with the Soviet Union and the PRC. It is evident that the possibility of either nation joining in a condominium with the United States against the other is feared by both, and that both have

taken actions during the past decade to inhibit such a development. Similarly, it is clear that the United States has benefited substantially from the breakdown in the Sino-Soviet alliance and from the circumstances of the 1970s in which it gained better relations with both the USSR and the PRC than they had with each other. The remaining fundamental issue of contention is whether the security component in Sino-American relations can be managed effectively so as to constrain the Soviet Union without provoking it, while also enhancing the stability of Sino-American relations.

This Note was prepared on the basis of notes compiled by Norman D. Levin and Jonathan D. Pollack. Levin assumed principal responsibility for those sessions dealing with China and for preparing the Summary. Pollack was principally responsible for those sessions dealing with the Soviet Union and U.S. allies. The final document, however, was otherwise very much a collaborative effort. Richard Solomon and Arnold Horelick made important substantive and editorial contributions to the Note in their capacity as co-organizers of the workshop.

## SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

The Rand Corporation convened a workshop entitled "Managing the Strategic Triangle" in Washington, D.C., on May 5-6, 1983, under the auspices of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. Attended by thirty-five senior officials and nongovernmental foreign-policy analysts, the Workshop examined a wide range of conceptual and practical issues associated with developing and managing U.S. policies toward the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China and with the interaction of these policies within the U.S.-USSR-PRC "strategic triangle."

### BASIC ISSUES

The Workshop discussions were organized around three broad subjects: the historical evolution of the strategic triangle, its current dynamics, and its implications for U.S. policy. The discussions brought to light several basic questions:

- *What exactly do we mean when we talk about a "strategic triangle?"* How do we define it? Of what does it consist? What are its practical implications in policy terms?
- *What are the lessons of the past decade regarding management of the triangle?*
- *Has the nature of the triangle changed or not?* If so, how has it changed, what accounts for this change, and what are the future prospects for relations among the United States, the PRC, and the Soviet Union?
- *Does the "strategic triangle" conceptualization still have validity?* If so, what are appropriate U.S. policies for managing relations within the triangle? If a "triangular" conception is not appropriate, what alternative approaches might the U.S. adopt?

The Workshop highlighted the need for greater consensus within the policy community on these and related issues, particularly those concerning policies toward China.

## PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

Defining the meaning of "strategic triangle" was no easier than assessing its practical policy implications. Most participants recognized that U.S. relations with the Soviet Union and the PRC require some sort of "triangle" awareness, since the actions of each of the major powers have strategic implications for the others. There was substantial disagreement, however, over the precise nature of the triangle and its practical implications. Some participants saw the triangle as an oversimplistic and misleading representation of reality that has little or no practical utility as an instrument of U.S. policy. Others saw it as an accurate representation of the international strategic environment and as an inescapable element in U.S. policy calculations concerning the USSR and the PRC. Still others saw the triangle essentially as a metaphor. Although a triangular conceptualization should neither be elevated to dogma nor allowed to obscure other important discussions of international affairs, they suggested, it is a useful device for capturing certain important aspects of the international milieu.

With regard to the lessons of the past in managing triangular relations, a number of broad conclusions emerged:

- The "heyday" of the triangle (from a U.S. standpoint, the early 1970s) was the result of special conditions that are not likely to recur. During this period, the United States was the beneficiary of a unique combination of circumstances.
- The major factor determining PRC policy toward the triangle has been concerns about China's national security. Although economic considerations have become more important in recent years in Chinese foreign policy, given the PRC's modernization efforts, they have been at best a secondary factor in its policies toward, and positioning within, the triangle.

- The main Chinese security concerns have been the intensity of the Soviet threat and the state of Soviet-American relations. China's fears of a Soviet-American condominium directed against it have been particularly important, and the PRC has sought since 1970 to avoid this "worst case" situation by moving in one way or another toward the United States.
- The nature and degree of U.S. influence on PRC policies have been indeterminate. Although the U.S. has probably had *some* influence over Beijing's policies (the extent of that influence is an issue over which there is considerable disagreement), it has not been able to exercise it in a highly predictable manner. This has diminished the potential value of utilizing U.S. influence as an element in shaping U.S.-China relations.

There was general agreement that the nature of the strategic triangle has changed considerably, with the "swing" position once held by the United States now being occupied by the PRC. This has resulted from the amelioration of Sino-Soviet relations and the concurrent deterioration of relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. Serious strains in U.S.-PRC relations in the last few years have contributed to this development as well. There was a difference of opinion among the participants, however, over whether or not this change has major strategic consequences.

As to future prospects, much will hinge on the evolution of Sino-Soviet relations. Although no consensus was reached, the majority sentiment appeared to downplay the likelihood of dramatic change in Moscow-Beijing relations. At the same time, few participants saw much opportunity for the United States to return to the "swing" position in the triangle, although many regarded this as the ideal position. In particular, the notion that the INF issue might serve as a vehicle for recapturing this position found little support.

On the question of whether or not the triangle concept still has validity, two relatively distinct schools of thought emerged. One school argued the limited utility of the concept in practice, as opposed to theory, if for no other reason than that the power relationships

among the United States, the Soviet Union, and China are so asymmetrical. Although U.S. policies toward the Soviet Union should take the PRC into consideration, just as U.S. policies toward China should take the USSR into consideration, policymakers should look beyond merely triangular relations and should drop the concept as a model for U.S. foreign policy. The second school of thought stressed not only the desirability but the essential importance of a triangular conceptualization. Because of the size and power distribution of all three countries, this school argued, the way in which one relates to the other is bound to affect all three. For this reason, security concerns have to be the central issue in their relationships, and a "triangular" conceptualization is inevitable.

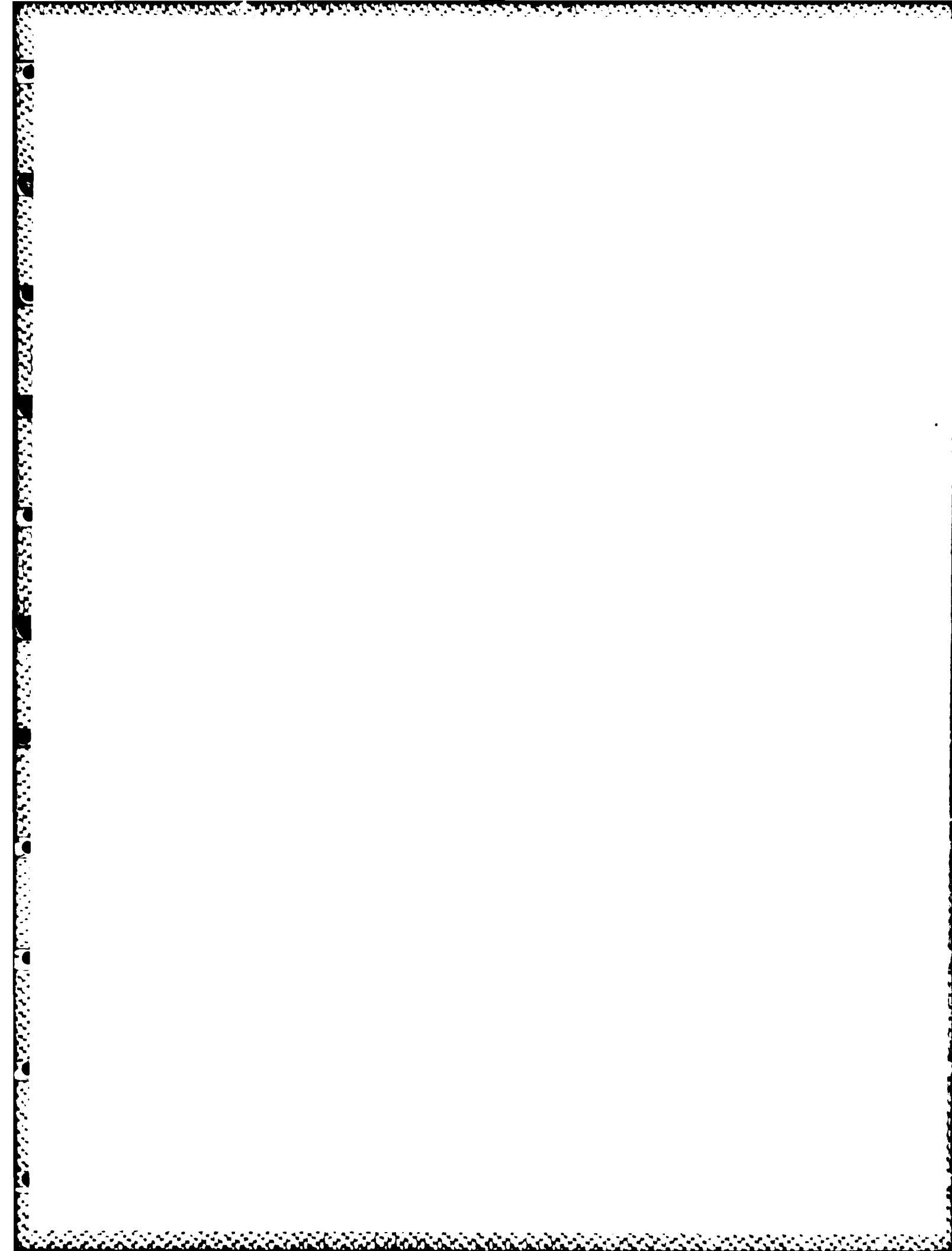
Three models were suggested as conceptual approaches to future U.S.-USSR-PRC relations: a restored U.S. swing role; reversion to a Sino-American anti-Soviet coalition; and pursuit of policies along essentially separate tracks. Varying views were expressed concerning the efficacy and merits of each of these approaches, and no clear consensus was achieved. There was general agreement, however, that the approach pursued by the United States in 1981-1982 had not been efficacious. Serious concern was expressed about the difficulty of achieving a consensus within the Administration on policies toward the PRC and the tendency to approach China simplistically from a "friend or foe" orientation. There was also general agreement that U.S. policies toward the Soviet Union in this period limited U.S. leverage in managing triangular relations, and that improvements in Soviet-American relations would have a positive impact on U.S. relations with the PRC.

## **POLICY MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

Despite the wide range of views expressed on many of the issues discussed at the Workshop, most participants agreed on the need for a complex and interactive approach to managing relations with the USSR and the PRC. Whether or not they accepted the relevance of viewing the world in triangular terms, nearly all recognized that the basic and interrelated security interests of the three powers require the United States to fashion its policies in an interactive manner.

Other policy management issues identified include the following:

- Avoiding simplistic depictions of U.S. relations with either China or the Soviet Union (e.g., categorizing China simply as a "friend" or "foe," or treating China exclusively in anti-Soviet terms).
- Reintroducing a limited but significant security component into the U.S.-PRC relationship.
- Giving the Chinese incentives for greater cooperation with the United States.





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## I. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE STRATEGIC TRIANGLE

### OVERVIEW

Discussion of the origins and evolution of the strategic triangle focused on four broad issues: (1) the strategic imperatives that drew the United States and China together; (2) the role of U.S.-Soviet detente in the evolution of the triangle; (3) the factors determining China's foreign-policy directions; and (4) the influence of U.S. policy on Chinese and Soviet behavior. Two principal conclusions emerged: First, national security concerns have been the major factor determining PRC policy with respect to the triangle; and second, the Soviet threat and the state of Soviet-American relations have been the chief elements among these security concerns. There was general agreement on the origins of the triangle, but less accord concerning the extent of Washington's influence over the directions of Chinese and Soviet foreign policies.

### ORIGINS OF THE TRIANGLE: ASSESSING THE STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

Most participants accepted the view that the "heyday" of the triangle (the early 1970s) reflected special circumstances that are unlikely to recur. Particularly important in this regard was the conjunction of an acute Soviet military threat to China and the PRC's need to recover from the trauma of the Cultural Revolution. When China's security concerns were combined with the Soviet Union's eagerness to promote detente with the U.S. and achieve a SALT I agreement, the United States found itself in an enviable "swing" position in relation to the two major communist powers.

The political and strategic advantages conferred upon the United States under the circumstances of the early 1970s posed choices for U.S. strategy. As several participants pointed out, both the Soviets and the Chinese had hopes of influencing U.S. behavior, in particular, drawing Washington away from collaboration with its major rival. Into the mid-1970s, the Soviets retained hopes of derailing and reversing the process of Sino-American rapprochement; and it was only in the late 1970s that

some of Moscow's worst fears of the consequences of U.S.-Chinese dealings (i.e., security cooperation between Washington and Beijing) came to the fore. Similarly, the Chinese repeatedly voiced concern that the United States either took them for granted because of the Sino-Soviet feud or sought to use Beijing as a pawn in the U.S.-Soviet rivalry. For the United States, it was suggested, the question was whether triangular politics represented primarily a tactical maneuver to gain leverage over both the Soviets and the Chinese or whether it reflected a larger strategic design to constrain Soviet actions and halt the momentum of Soviet geopolitical gains.

Throughout the 1970s, the United States retained the greatest flexibility of the three states in relation to strategic interactions. Clearly there were risks and uncertainties in dealing with the Chinese, but the continuity of an expansionist Soviet policy (toward China, as well as globally) justified the risks. In this sense, it was suggested, the strategic triangle offered a "bridge" to the Chinese; it remained for the U.S. to take the steps that would benefit the security interests of both states.

#### **THE IMPACT OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS: THE EFFECTS OF DETENTE**

There was general agreement that the status of U.S.-Soviet relations has been a major factor influencing the evolution of the strategic triangle. Particularly important was the move toward detente in the early 1970s. There was much less agreement, however, concerning the benefits derived by the United States under conditions of "triangularity." According to one school of thought, a mixed Soviet-American relationship with elements of both antagonism and cooperation was ideally suited to enhance U.S. influence in both Beijing and Moscow. As noted by a number of participants, during the early 1970s U.S. policymakers concluded that U.S. policy goals vis-a-vis the Soviet Union were most readily achievable when U.S.-Chinese relations were improving and the Soviets also saw prospects for improved U.S.-Soviet relations. In this view, Moscow had clear incentives to move toward agreements with the United States (for example, regarding SALT I and the quadripartite agreement on Berlin) so as not to be excluded from the improving international atmosphere fostered by U.S. ties with Beijing.

According to an alternative view, however, the early 1970s were precisely the period when the Soviets were able to secure a SALT agreement that was disadvantageous to U.S. interests, as well as to achieve sustained momentum in their advances in the third world. From this point of view, even though the Soviets and Chinese both wanted to improve relations with the United States, these circumstances did not necessarily benefit U.S. security interests. Whatever the presumed advantages for the United States in achieving a "swing" position in the triangle, therefore, steadfastness of purpose in confronting Soviet power was by far the more important consideration in U.S. foreign policy toward *both* Moscow and Beijing.

Just as detente was a major factor influencing the evolution of the triangle, the Soviet Union's interest in improving Sino-Soviet relations was linked directly to the deterioration of U.S.-Soviet relations. As several participants noted, however, even in the event of some improvement in Moscow-Beijing relations, the essential condition that fostered closer Sino-American relations (i.e., the exercise of Soviet hegemony that threatens the security of both the United States and the PRC) is likely to persist.

In this view, the strategic consequences of U.S.-Soviet-Chinese interactions must remain uppermost in American policy calculations. As one participant noted, the essence of triangular relations for all three states remains security. For the Soviet leadership, which fears the challenge of a two-front conflict, the perceptions of the triangle are understandably different from those of Washington and Beijing. Thus, the triangle is anything but equilateral, nor do the asymmetries within it confer automatic advantage to the United States.

#### **CHINA'S STRATEGIC POSITION: DETERMINING BEIJING'S POLICY DIRECTIONS**

China's position in the strategic triangle relative to the United States and the Soviet Union also elicited considerable discussion. As the weakest, most vulnerable, and least capable of the three states in projecting power and influence, China has had to react to the dangers and uncertainties of a world over which it has little control, and to

rely on collaboration with more powerful states to establish a strategic balance. As a result, Chinese policies in the triangle have been largely derived from the state of U.S.-Soviet relations, the status of Sino-Soviet relations, and trends in the regional security environment.

Among Chinese security concerns, the possibility of a Soviet-American condominium directed against the PRC has ranked as a major problem. In historical terms, this fear is not unrealistic. Since 1970, the PRC has sought to avoid this "worst case" development by moving toward the United States. When U.S.-Soviet relations have worsened appreciably, however, China has tried to distance itself from *both* superpowers. When Soviet-American relations have been stable but basically hostile, with no prospect of either a condominium or direct conflict between the two, Beijing has attempted to manipulate superpower tensions to its own benefit. When either superpower has directly threatened PRC interests, whatever the state of U.S.-Soviet relations, Beijing has moved toward the less threatening superpower.

Virtually all participants therefore felt that national security concerns have been the principal factor in PRC positioning within the triangle. There is little in the historical record to suggest that economic considerations have been pivotal in determining China's strategic position. Although China's domestic economic development strategy has become a more significant policy priority in recent years, it has been at best a secondary factor in comparison with security interests and needs.

The state of China's domestic politics has had a significant impact on PRC foreign policy. Chinese leaders have had great difficulty in sustaining China's opening toward outside powers in a way that is not perceived as threatening to Chinese sovereignty and that does not call into question China's commitment to "self-reliance."

A related but somewhat different view of China's shifting strategic position focused on the U.S. factor in Chinese security concerns. According to this view, China's periods of movement away from the United States can be explained largely by Beijing's unmet expectations regarding American credibility and consistency. To the extent that the Chinese have felt let down by the United States, or that the United States has not stood up to the Soviet Union, they have backed away from

close association with the United States. The principal lesson the Chinese derived from the early years of triangular politics was that they were being used by the United States, and this has severely compromised their interest in cooperating fully and confidently with the United States.

A sharp dissent to this view was offered by another participant, who stated that the issue was not so much that the United States had failed to keep its promises to China, but that the United States had made too many promises in the first place. Such an approach was unrealistic and would only fuel large expectations on the part of Beijing that the United States could not possibly meet.

Although no one at the workshop disputed the political and military threat posed by the Soviet Union to China, several participants called attention to a number of internal considerations that affect Chinese foreign policy. The general American inclination has been to accept the official Chinese version of the history of Sino-Soviet relations since 1949, particularly Beijing's emphasis on Moscow's hegemonic behavior toward the PRC and its efforts to infringe on PRC sovereignty. Although one discussant suggested that the Sino-Soviet alliance had been essentially a marriage of convenience, others disputed this view, noting that many Chinese speak warmly of the accomplishments of that era and of the substantial Soviet assistance to China. Very little is known about China's experience with the Soviets in the 1950s--what various Chinese leadership groups thought about the Soviets, how their perceptions of relations with the USSR changed over time, etc. In particular, it was suggested, we need a keener sense of the views of Chinese leaders who had the most intimate contact with the Soviets during this period. Many of these leaders have reemerged in recent years, as their technical training and expertise have been increasingly needed in China's modernization program. The potential political significance of their contemporary reemergence in senior leadership positions needs further examination.

Furthermore, the Sino-American rapprochement did not develop overnight. What is perhaps most striking about the rapprochement, one participant suggested, is not that it took place but that it took so long to occur. The gravest threats to the security of the PRC occurred

in 1969, when the Soviets issued veiled warnings about a possible preemptive nuclear attack on China. It took 18 months, however, for the Chinese move toward the United States to take hold, suggesting considerable resistance within China to the opening to the United States. This fact alone, it was noted, raises questions about the depth and breadth of China's commitment to normal relations with the United States.

#### THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES: ASSAYING THE EXTENT OF U.S. INFLUENCE ON PRC AND SOVIET POLICY

Disagreements were also reflected in discussions concerning the nature and extent of U.S. influence upon China. One school of thought assessed the United States as a significant factor in Chinese policy calculations. The PRC needs, wants, and expects American support, but to the extent that the U.S. lacks a clear, consistent direction in opposing the Soviets, the Chinese will back off considerably from dealings with Washington. An alternative point of view disputed this notion and saw the Chinese as autonomous actors, motivated at least as much by domestic economic and political considerations as by some larger strategic design.

Depending on one's viewpoint, several conclusions were possible: (1) The United States has considerable influence on China, but it has not always been used successfully or wisely; (2) there is little the United States can do to affect PRC policy, and we should therefore not try too hard to influence thinking in Beijing; or (3) the United States has some indirect influence on PRC decisionmaking but it is not highly predictable, thus diminishing the potential value of such influence in shaping the development of U.S.-PRC relations. The discussion ended without final resolution of this issue.

Fewer differences of opinion were evident in discussions of "triangular" influence on Soviet policymaking. Most participants agreed that while the U.S. had hoped to induce more cooperative behavior from the Soviets in the early 1970s by improving Washington's relations with Beijing, Moscow viewed periods of good relations with Washington as opportunities to sound out the United States on a blatantly anti-Chinese



common front.<sup>1</sup> As detente soured in the mid-1970s, the possibilities for influencing Soviet behavior through triangular politics became even more remote. As one participant observed, the Soviets had obvious incentives to impede the full normalization and growth of Sino-American relations, but the United States had never been able to parlay Moscow's concerns into greater leverage over Soviet policymaking. Indeed, as the Soviets increasingly recognized that the prospects for drawing the United States into an avowedly anti-Chinese front were diminishing, Moscow heightened its efforts to encircle China while concurrently making periodic political overtures to Beijing. Thus, most participants agreed that there was little the United States could do *directly* to influence Soviet policy by exploiting the U.S. position in the triangle.

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<sup>1</sup> This limited the potential U.S. leverage upon Soviet policies.

## II. THE CURRENT DYNAMICS OF THE TRIANGLE

### OVERVIEW

Three broad issues were raised in the sessions devoted to current dynamics: (1) the significance of recent shifts in China's strategic and foreign-policy orientation; (2) the prospects for further change in the triangle and their strategic consequences; and (3) the impact of allied perspectives on regional security and arms control issues. No clear consensus emerged on most of these issues. Sharp differences were evident concerning the degree of change in Chinese foreign policy and its impact on the interests of the United States and its allies. There also were major disagreements regarding the likelihood of major changes in future Sino-Soviet relations, especially concerning the USSR's willingness to make concessions to the PRC.

### RECENT SHIFTS IN CHINA'S STRATEGIC ORIENTATION

#### Explaining Chinese Policy Change

The discussion of recent shifts in China's strategic orientation began with the observation that the position of China within the triangle has changed dramatically in the past ten years. Although it remains by far the weakest of the three powers, China is far better off than it was a decade ago. It was suggested that PRC leaders are well aware of this change, which accounts for their belief that China needs the United States less than it did in previous decades. Although no one disputed this interpretation, a somewhat divergent view was offered about the importance that China imputes to the triangle. According to this view, China strongly *wants* to sustain the triangle, because it confers on the PRC an importance in the global strategic balance that is otherwise lacking. Indeed, the Chinese fear that the triangle may be losing its relevance, leading to a loss of China's influence on the two superpowers.

In assessing recent Chinese behavior within the strategic triangle, there was a marked difference in inclination among workshop participants. One approach placed primary emphasis on cultural determinants. According

to this approach, changes in Chinese behavior should not be over-emphasized. Although changes have occurred, the fundamental Chinese approach or "style" remains constant. This approach is rooted in the Chinese sense of power. Defined largely in terms of "dignity" rather than "participation" in making decisions, such power can be retained by China even if its influence in the world decreases. The resulting Chinese approach is to posture on the moral high ground and to try and "shame" others into what the Chinese consider "proper" behavior. Accordingly, the Chinese try to tempt the Soviet Union, without actually doing much, while needling the United States without risking irreparable damage to the U.S.-PRC relationship. This fundamental Chinese approach accounts for the strange way in which the PRC describes relations with the United States (e.g., as "stagnating"). As a result, it is very difficult to define exactly what conditions the Chinese would regard as "good."

The other approach gave major stress to the rational determinants of PRC foreign policy. Accordingly, it is easy to understand why China moved toward the West in 1969-1970, given its isolation during the Cultural Revolution, its perception of threat, etc. It is equally easy to understand on objective grounds alone why there was a further switch in PRC policy by the early 1980s, given the decreased perception of Soviet threat, the increased awareness of the costs (in the form of social contamination) of turning outward for technology, etc. Thus, it was only natural that the PRC would seek to contain foreign influences on its domestic affairs rather than to integrate more fully with the West. Proponents of this view see China's present policies toward both the United States and the Soviet Union in flux, rather than fixed by cultural imperatives, and they expect further changes because the present policies do not accord with Chinese interests.

As one participant pointed out, however, there are problems with each of these approaches. The problem with the first is common to all national character assessments: They tend to slight the importance of differences among leaders sharing the same broad set of attitudes. As the cases of Mao and Deng suggest, however, such differences may be more significant than the common features ascribed to national character. The problem with the second approach is an overemphasis on rationality.

Certain Chinese decisions, such as the 1969 decision to provoke Sino-Soviet border hostilities, are hard to understand on rational grounds alone.

Proponents of both views agreed that the growing nationalistic component of Chinese foreign policy was intended to compensate for China's deepening political and economic frustrations, as the PRC leadership slowly begins to appreciate the difficult, prolonged requirements of their modernization strategy. The Chinese are frustrated both by what they feel are the discriminatory, grudging U.S. policies on technology transfer, and by their realization that they are less central to U.S. foreign policy than they had expected to be during the early years of triangular diplomacy. With an increasingly hostile U.S.-Soviet relationship, the Chinese have even less incentive to become embroiled in superpower tensions. The PRC needs stability in its security environment to permit an orderly process of economic reconstruction. As a result, Beijing has no alternative but to seek a reduction of Sino-Soviet tensions. Such a step, moreover, signals to the United States that the PRC has options for dealing with the Soviets other than becoming excessively dependent on the United States.

### **The Significance of Chinese Policy Change**

Underlying this discussion was the question of the degree and significance of recent changes in Chinese policies toward the United States and the Soviet Union. A number of perspectives were expressed on these issues. One view suggested that there has been minimal change, since Chinese policies are rooted in cultural dimensions which themselves have not changed. Thus, Chinese utterances and "principles" should not be taken too seriously. Another view tended to see major changes resulting from changes in the objective conditions affecting the PRC. Taken together, the changes in Chinese policies represent a "strategic shift" on the part of the PRC away from an emphasis upon "anti-hegemony" and a "united front" to its present posture of independence. Although China's economic orientation toward the West has remained constant, this does not involve either political or strategic alignment.

A third view stressed the need to see adjustments in Chinese policy in the context of the broader PRC political and economic posture. From this perspective, there has not been very much change. Rather, the Chinese are merely attempting to maintain some equilibrium lest they get totally enmeshed with the West.

Still another view saw elements of *both* change and continuity in Chinese policy. The important question is whether or not the changes were avoidable, that is, whether or not the United States is "responsible" for policy changes in China. Here, it was argued, the answer is negative. Although the Reagan Administration may have played a catalytic role in Beijing's move toward a more independent foreign policy, such a development probably would have occurred sooner or later in any case. Given the need for the Sino-American relationship to arrive at a normal and sustainable level, the sooner this happened, the better. In the same way that China needed an unresolved border conflict with the USSR to dramatize its objections to the Soviet security and geopolitical challenge to Beijing, it needs small, manageable confrontations with the United States to dramatize that it is not moving too close to the United States. Both are tactical moves by the PRC. The question of how far such moves will go depends on how the United States and the USSR react to such change.

### **The Soviet Factor in Chinese Policy**

A final view tended to see matters more from a Soviet than a Chinese perspective. In this view, even if China has tried to "balance" between the United States and the USSR, this approach has not worked, because the Soviets have not been willing to modify their aims sufficiently to make a real Sino-Soviet rapprochement possible. This raised the question of whether or not recent changes in Chinese foreign policy are likely to have strategic significance. Those inclined to say "no" appeared to feel that the PRC's relationship with the Soviet Union is "puny" compared to that with the United States, and in any case, the Soviets will continue to adhere to policies that preclude any major improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. A somewhat different but supporting view emphasized that the PRC is not trying to distance itself

from the United States as much as it is trying to maintain good relations with the U.S. at the same time that it minimizes tensions and establishes greater balance with the Soviet Union. This makes the strategic significance of the assertion of an "independent" foreign policy different than would otherwise be the case.

Those inclined to say "yes" appeared to be divided into two groups. One group argued that although *basic* changes in Soviet policies toward China are not likely, such changes may not be necessary to move the Sino-Soviet relationship in the direction of reduced tensions. The other argued that changes in Sino-Soviet relations *already have had* strategic significance for the United States, moving U.S.-PRC relations back at least one level, while moving USSR-PRC relations forward.

In this regard, it was suggested that an important indicator will be the results of the current Sino-American oil negotiations. If China agrees to long-term relations with a number of Western petroleum firms, then the move toward the USSR will not be so significant. Conversely, if the talks achieve less positive results, it would be a major setback for the United States. Others disagreed, however, that the oil negotiations are a "litmus test" for China's future foreign-policy orientation. Many other agreements are still possible, they argued, even if the oil negotiations fall through.

An additional line of discussion raised the question of whether the Chinese see the Soviets as a serious economic alternative to the United States. Here there were two views: probably no, and maybe yes. Those who argued "probably no" tended to stress the value to China of access to Western technology for its economic modernization program, and the inability of the Soviet Union to offer comparable assistance. Those who argued "maybe yes" tended to question the extent to which PRC decisions are made on the basis of hard information as opposed to a visceral reaction. In addition, they suggested that the Chinese could perceive Soviet technology as being marginally more important to their development prospects than Western assistance (especially in the upgrading of China's existing industrial facilities).

## PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE IN SINO-SOVIET AND TRIANGULAR RELATIONS

No consensus was evident on how leaders in Moscow view the present status of U.S.-China relations. There was also substantial disagreement on how far the Soviets might be prepared to go to accommodate the Chinese and thus achieve some degree of Sino-Soviet reconciliation. One participant argued that opinion in the United States understates the pace and scope of Sino-Soviet accommodation, but at the same time overstates the strategic consequences of improvements in Moscow-Beijing relations. In this view, the Soviets see China as a major power highly sensitive to being manipulated by others; hence, they regard it as "natural" for Beijing to try to position itself between the United States and the Soviet Union. Moreover, the Soviets implicitly acknowledge past mistakes in their management of Sino-Soviet relations and are prepared to pursue a steady, businesslike approach to normalizing Sino-Soviet ties. They would even like to "broker" a resolution of Sino-Vietnamese differences and work out a political solution to the hostilities in Afghanistan. Although some in the Soviet leadership are prepared to make unilateral gestures toward Beijing (for example, through limited but symbolically significant troop withdrawals along the Sino-Soviet border), such a move is opposed by other Soviet leaders, especially in the military.

Those persuaded of the prospects for improved Sino-Soviet relations saw a change in the Soviet mood following Andropov's accession to power. The Soviets began to describe China as a socialist country in terms of its development plans, struggling with complicated issues (e.g., centralization vs. decentralization, agricultural reforms, etc.) familiar to the Soviet leadership. There were even hopes in Moscow for restoring party-to-party relations. The continuing decline in U.S.-Soviet relations sustains Moscow's interest in improving Sino-Soviet relations, since the Soviets feel that the United States will be unsettled by improved Sino-Soviet ties. At the same time, improved relations with China would be a significant plus for the Soviet leadership and might afford Moscow greater credibility in dealing with other socialist states, especially in Eastern Europe. Such improvement would not portend a

major strategic realignment, however, as the Chinese are extremely unlikely to reestablish a security alliance with the Soviet Union.

Other participants sharply disputed this view. Those Soviets offering an optimistic assessment of the future of Sino-Soviet ties do so, they argued, with a concrete foreign-policy purpose in mind: to unnerve and thus gain maximum leverage on the United States. To the extent that they are sincere, they represent a school of thought on the fringe of the political-military *apparatus*; in no sense are they close to prevailing leadership opinions. The dominant leadership group within the Kremlin opposes offering serious concessions to the Chinese. Andropov's dependence on the Soviet military for internal political support made any such concessions even more unlikely.

To those of this persuasion, it is doubtful that the expressions of optimism voiced by both Chinese and Soviet officials in the fall of 1982 for an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations will long continue. Both sides face a problem of maintaining the *appearance* of momentum in the absence of serious forward movement. The Soviets understand, moreover, that Chinese urgings that Moscow remove the "obstacles" to improved Sino-Soviet relations constitute no less than a demand that the Soviets withdraw from Asia. Even if they were less worried than they are about China's long-term power potential, this is clearly not something the Soviets are prepared to do. It is thus impossible, it was emphasized, to ignore the strategic context of Sino-Soviet differences. The Soviet political and military encirclement of China is a real issue, with clear security implications, as is the Soviet alignment with Vietnam. For these reasons, it would be impossible for major improvements in Sino-Soviet ties *not* to affect the larger strategic picture.

These observations led proponents of this view to conclude that there is little or no prospect that the Soviets will be able to capitalize on their present political opportunities with the Chinese, since they are unwilling to undertake steps substantial enough to induce major Chinese reciprocation. Having long called on China to bury the hatchet, moreover, the Soviets now see the Chinese (largely on China's own initiative) sounding them out on improved relations. China's overtures have thus reinforced Soviet convictions that a hard line against Beijing is the best way to deal with the Chinese.



In view of these circumstances, several participants stressed that the United States has no reason to panic at every hint of an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. Since the Soviets remain unwilling to make any serious changes in what the Chinese perceive as the Soviet encirclement of China, and since the Chinese retain deep and abiding suspicions about the Soviets and their challenge to PRC security, any improvement in relations is likely to be modest at best and not ameliorative of the more enduring causes of the Sino-Soviet rivalry. Nevertheless, others cautioned, the public reaction to any improvements in Sino-Soviet relations (as distinct from the reactions of U.S. policymakers) could exaggerate their substantive importance. In this sense, the psychological impact of even modest improvements in USSR-PRC relations could prove far greater than any strategic implications.

## **THE IMPACT OF ALLIED PERSPECTIVES**

### **The Role of Arms Control**

There was considerable discussion at the workshop of the SS-20 issue, the relationship between the INF talks and START, and the possible impact of U.S. arms control policy on Chinese views of the triangle. Despite the Reagan Administration's commitment to the zero option and to a "global limits" approach to INF deployments, the participants felt that the SS-20 debate has remained largely a debate about Europe. One discussant noted that the United States has a clearly articulated European policy, but no policy for the Asian region. Although the United States retains vital security commitments in Asia (in particular, to Japan and South Korea), the nuclear issue is far less central to debates about U.S. security policy in Asia than it is to debates about U.S. policy in Europe.

Several participants nevertheless called attention to the growing linkages between Asian and European security. The West Europeans, they argued, understand the enormous implications of the Sino-Soviet rivalry for the security of Europe. Soviet concerns about the need to conduct war on both fronts are extremely important for the stability of deterrence in Europe. If the Soviets were relieved of this concern, Moscow's political and military pressure against Europe could increase

enormously. At the same time, Japan has grown increasingly sensitive to the Soviet military threat in Asia, in both nuclear and conventional terms. And even if China has sought to dissociate itself from close alignment with the United States, Beijing remains the indirect beneficiary of the U.S. position on INF. It is worth noting that the Chinese were extensively briefed on the SS-20 issue during Secretary of State Shultz's trip to Beijing in February 1983, and that they voiced support for U.S. policy on this issue.

### **U.S.-China Relations and Regional Security**

As several participants observed, the security concerns of the regional states of Asia have tended to oscillate between two principal anxieties: the prospect of a close security alignment between the United States and China (and potentially Japan), and the possibility of a major Sino-Soviet rapprochement. During the late 1970s, there was widespread concern throughout East Asia that the forging of a quasi-alliance between the United States and China might lead Washington to neglect the interests of other Asian states. The movement away from a Sino-American united front is thus quietly welcomed in many Asian capitals. At the same time, there is considerable concern about a possible Sino-Soviet rapprochement. In the view of several participants, therefore, the optimum situation for the regional powers is one of a continuing but nonconfrontational Sino-Soviet rivalry, with the U.S. regional security presence serving as a vital stabilizing element.

Japan's security concerns were also raised in the discussion. Broadly speaking, the Japanese have been concerned about four principal issues: (1) Japan's centrality in U.S. Asian policy; (2) China's power potential and strategic role, especially in relation to the United States; (3) Soviet power in Asia, and Moscow's policy toward Japan; and (4) stability on the Korean peninsula. On the first issue, the Japanese, having earlier expressed unease about a Sino-American alliance, have now been reassured that they remain the centerpiece of U.S. policy in the region. They have also been reassured by Beijing's primary focus on internal economic construction and its interest in a stable and peaceful international environment in which to pursue

economic development. In this sense, the Japanese seem much closer to their preferred situation of "a weak China that is trying to be strong." This situation will allow for growing political and economic links between Japan and China, but without the potentially destabilizing prospect of an assertive "pan-Asianism." Given the poor state of Soviet-Japanese relations, however, and limited prospects for their significant improvement, the Japanese are concerned that continuing poor relations with Moscow might lead to an excessively confrontational atmosphere in Northeast Asia, with the Korean peninsula as the potential locale where tensions could escalate. Neither the Soviets nor the Chinese seem inclined to support North Korean moves against the South, however, resulting in the likely maintenance of the *status quo*.

The views of the ASEAN states reflect their different geopolitical circumstances. As one participant observed, the ASEAN states understand that Vietnam represents a "gut issue" to the Chinese that effectively precludes a real Sino-Soviet rapprochement, at least in the short run. Over the longer run, however, many in Southeast Asia see no alternative to a Vietnamese accommodation with China. Since the Soviets in this view have no "intrinsic interest in Southeast Asia," China remains the true long-term problem in the security of the region. Even as regional concerns (especially in Indonesia and Malaysia) have now been somewhat eased regarding the possibility of a U.S. alliance with China, America's longer-term intentions in the region--and the prospect for expanded security arrangements with Japan--remain the object of considerable anxiety.

### III. IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

#### OVERVIEW

With respect to conceptual and policy management issues, the discussion dealt with three broad subjects: (1) the challenge to U.S. policymakers of devising a model or conceptual approach to managing interactive U.S.-Soviet-PRC relations; (2) the nature of the Reagan Administration's China policy; and (3) alternative approaches for managing triangular relations. Embedded in these broad subjects were several issues: whether the "strategic triangle" is merely a psychological and conceptual construct or is an objective reality which should be a major factor in U.S. policy thinking; whether the United States can or should try to recapture the "swing" position within the triangle; and whether or not there is a consensus within the Administration regarding China policy and the efficacy of the Administration's present policy approach.

Four main conclusions emerged from the discussions: The United States is no longer in the "swing" position within the triangle and a return to the conditions of the early 1970s is not likely (although there was some disagreement over whether or not the United States should try to achieve this position); China has effectively moved into the "swing" position, and its perception of decreased Soviet threat makes the prospects for the United States recapturing this position even more unlikely; greater U.S. leverage on China within the triangle probably requires better U.S. relations with the Soviet Union; and the United States needs a new, more refined concept of China, since that of "friend" or "foe" is not adequate (although again, there was disagreement over what this new concept should be).

#### U.S. POLICY CHALLENGES

Discussion of this subject began with the observation that the fundamental security challenge facing the United States is the prospect of a two-front war. Historically, this has been the major problem confronting U.S. defense planners (as with Germany and Japan in World

War II, and the USSR and the PRC in the 1950s and 1960s). This basic challenge raises three important questions. First, can the United States turn this situation around on the Soviets, as it did during the early 1970s, but in a manner that constrains rather than provokes them? Second, can the United States demonstrate that its policies toward the Soviet Union and China are interactive? In particular, can it make clear that certain kinds of Soviet behavior will precipitate expanded cooperation with the PRC? Third, can the United States devise a long-term policy toward managing relations with both China and the Soviet Union, especially under circumstances where Sino-Soviet relations might achieve some improvement?

Given this fundamental security challenge, it was suggested, U.S. policy objectives should be fourfold: to find a way to caution the Soviet Union about the *potential* for increased security cooperation between the United States and China without provoking the Soviets, and in a manner that will generate public support; to give the Chinese incentives for greater cooperation with the United States by adding more positive elements to the bilateral relationship; to conduct policy so as to minimize the potential for rapprochement between the USSR and the PRC; and to try to put the U.S. back in the "swing" role in the triangle.

The question of whether the triangle is merely a conceptual construct or is an objective reality produced two relatively distinct schools of thought. One view saw the triangle as an oversimplistic and misleading depiction of reality that has little or no practical utility, if for no other reason than that the power relationships among the three major powers are so asymmetrical. Moreover, although the Chinese do recognize a "triangle" and are great "card" players, many other factors are at work in their policy deliberations. Japan, for instance, is extremely important to the PRC and is therefore a central element in Chinese policymaking. U.S. policymakers are overly "hung up" on the triangle notion and should look beyond a merely "triangular" conception. Although U.S. policies toward the Soviet Union should take the PRC into consideration, this school of thought argued, the United States should drop the conceptualization of a "triangle" as a model.

The other school of thought stressed not only the desirability, but the essential importance of a triangle conceptualization. Because of the size and power distribution of all three countries, this school argued, the way in which one relates to the other is bound to affect all three. For this reason, security has to be the central issue in Sino-Soviet-American relations, and a "triangular" conceptualization is inevitable.

Straddling these two schools of thought were some participants who saw the triangle primarily as a metaphor. Although a triangular conceptualization should not be elevated to dogma or allowed to obscure other important dimensions of international affairs, it is a useful organizing device for capturing in shorthand fashion certain important aspects of the international strategic environment.

Noting the different configurations in U.S.-USSR-PRC relations over the last decade, one participant further suggested three models as conceptual approaches for future relations: a restored U.S. swing role; reversion to a Sino-American anti-Soviet coalition; and pursuit of U.S. policies toward the USSR and PRC along essentially separate tracks. The formation of an anti-Soviet coalition is probably both unrealistic and undesirable in present circumstances. "Triangularity" may now be somewhat diminished, but it is nonetheless essential in the U.S. approach to the PRC. Thus, we should position ourselves so as to be able to take advantage of potential tensions in Sino-Soviet relations. To do so, we need to demonstrate that we take China seriously in international relations, while at the same time devising a more complex and less confrontational approach toward the Soviet Union. Although the United States is not going to change its policy toward the Soviet Union because of some hypothetical effect on China (or vice versa), it was added, we should be aware that policies toward the USSR will influence the development of U.S.-China relations, and that an improvement in Soviet-American relations is likely to have a positive impact on U.S. relations with the PRC.

There was general agreement that these three approaches, although somewhat oversimplified, were useful as broad frames of reference. There was a considerable range of views, however, on the specifics. An

area of particular discussion concerned the "swing" role in the triangle, and the question of whether the United States can or should try to recapture the "swing" position. Here, many participants cautioned that the 1970s was a unique period that resulted from a combination of three factors: intense Sino-Soviet competition, active pursuit of detente by both the United States and the Soviet Union, and the U.S. rapprochement with China. There is no way, they argued, that we can return to these circumstances. Whether or not the United States can recreate the circumstances of the early 1970s, however, is less important than whether it can devise a coherent strategy for the 1980s. Another view, however, questioned the utility of the model itself, describing the notion of having better relations with each of the two communist states than either has with the other as an "elusive optimum." How can you sustain a relationship in which you are the friend of another's enemy? After a while, one or the other will try to pressure you to make a choice. Even as a model, this view argued, such an arrangement is inherently unstable.

Other participants had different views. A number questioned, for example, why the United States cannot return to a "swing" position if that means "having better relations with both the USSR and the PRC than either has with the other." In fact, they argued, between 1971 and 1980 the United States *always* had better relations with each than either had with the other. Other considerations, such as the intensity of the relationships, the degree of cooperation, etc., must also be factors. A somewhat different view agreed that the conditions of the early 1970s are not repeatable, but argued that the United States should *try* to achieve such a "swing" position. In doing so, however, it would have to use the relationship with China to constrain rather than provoke the USSR. One way to do this would be to maintain the prospect for increased security cooperation with the PRC in response to aggressive Soviet behavior. The credible prospect of security cooperation, it was argued, is a more important deterrent than its actual realization.

One participant noted, however, that we have had a relatively bad "psychological base" for our relationship with China. By overemphasizing the importance of our relationship with China, we feed Beijing's sense of self-importance. Moreover, by stressing the PRC in

our domestic politics, we raise the possibility of the "who lost China" argument again emerging in U.S. domestic politics. We also create the basis for genuine disenchantment with China within the American public. We need to normalize our relationship with China, it was argued, but in a different way: namely, by putting China into more of a regional perspective. We should make it clear that although we support a developing China, the PRC is not of overarching importance to the United States. We could then move to repair our relations with the Soviet Union--the more essential relationship--and in the process readjust Chinese expectations about U.S.-PRC relations. This way, it was emphasized, we would not exaggerate either our bilateral relations with China or the interactions of the strategic triangle.

The major problem with the Reagan Administration's strategic approach, other participants countered, is that it has demonstrated *little* or *no* awareness of the interaction between our Soviet and China policies. As a result, the Administration is insufficiently attentive to the political opportunities that attach to this interaction. The problem with the triangle concept, they argued, is not the concept but trying to apply it in practice. In particular, it is too Soviet-oriented and makes U.S.-PRC relations overly dependent on what the Soviets do. This is a situation the Chinese will never tolerate. Moreover, another participant added, if we reduce the PRC to the status of a regional power, the Chinese will react very negatively because they see themselves as a global power.

Still another view argued that the United States cannot go too far toward either the first or second model because of Congress and public opinion. This view favored a variant of the "separate tracks" approach concerning U.S. policies toward China and the Soviet Union. The Reagan Administration has in fact been pursuing this type of approach, but it has been going about it in the wrong way. As a result, our relations with both the USSR and the PRC have deteriorated appreciably. This is one of the great policy failures of the Administration. Since it is in the U.S. interest to have good relations with each power on its own terms, we must make a major effort to improve our relations with both. One reason the PRC is so relaxed, another participant added, is because of the level of Soviet-American hostility. If there were an improvement



in U.S.-Soviet relations, it would be very favorable to U.S.-PRC relations. This general line of argument appeared to be one of the few areas on which there was broad agreement.

One participant sought to resolve the question of whether China is a global or regional power by arguing that it is both. Militarily it is a regional power, although it has a growing nuclear capability. In other ways, however, it is a country with a global impact. China's failure to govern itself effectively, for example, would have major consequences for the world. The fact that there *is* such a possibility is one reason for U.S. concern. Therefore, it is difficult to consider China in a purely regional perspective, although many of its problems are regional in nature.

Similarly, this participant continued, managing U.S. relations with the PRC and the USSR has a number of dimensions: a triangular dimension, a European dimension, a bilateral dimension, a Taiwan dimension, etc. Therefore, these relations cannot be viewed in only one-dimensional terms. None of these dimensions can be managed, however, without a healthy awareness of the triangular context, given the strong security aspects of these relationships. It is for this reason that the United States should retain the option of returning to the "swing" position. But the United States must be careful not to go too far in either direction. It should keep the triangle in mind, but not make it the center of its attention. In this regard, the key question is not the triangle, but how to manage the Taiwan issue. The triangular focus may be a means for diminishing the salience of this issue, but it does not address the central question. The United States cannot allow difficulties with the PRC over Taiwan to continue to dominate relations with Beijing.

Another way to achieve an appropriate concept, it was suggested, is not in triangular terms but in an Asian security context. What, from this perspective, will the U.S. response be to the ongoing Soviet military buildup in Asia and the Pacific? One cannot conceive of organizing an approach to the USSR that ignores China. Moreover, one cannot choose between China and Japan. *Both* are important. The focus must be on the Asian security context; and a regional approach should be devised that is responsive to the Soviet security challenge.

## THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION'S APPROACH TO CHINA

This exchange of views concerning conceptual approaches led to an extended discussion of the Reagan Administration's policies toward China. The discussion began with the contention that there is a "conceptual consensus" within the Administration on three key points: (1) China *is* a strategic asset to the United States and should be nurtured; (2) policy toward China must be made with an awareness of its impact on the Soviet Union; and (3) the goal of U.S. policy is to increase the durability of the Sino-American relationship so that it can withstand potential shocks that might affect it. There remains some ambivalence in parts of the bureaucracy over whether China should be considered a "friend" or a potential "foe" of the United States, as well as disagreement over what the United States should do about the goals in its China policy and how much they are worth pursuing at the expense of other goals. The debate is not over where China stands today, but over where it will be in ten or twenty years. If we could be certain China was going to remain a friend, we would not have problems with such issues as technology transfer. This ambivalence is fundamental in nature, it was argued, and both precedes and transcends the policies of the Reagan Administration.

Responses to this portrayal of the Administration's policy tended to question whether there is consensus within the Administration on policy toward China, and whether the categorization of "friend" or "foe" is a useful concept. It was argued that within the Administration there is a wide range of views on China policy. It is because of this lack of consensus that there is ambivalence concerning the degree to which the United States should be a partner in Chinese modernization in general and technology transfer in particular. There was a lively discussion of the "friend" or "foe" categorization. The predominant view was that such a formulation is too simplistic and inappropriate for policymaking concerning a strategic relationship.

One participant suggested the need for a new conception of the PRC: namely, as an important country but no more important certainly than Japan or, in some ways, the states of ASEAN. This would provide a basis for incremental gains with the PRC while not feeding grandiose Chinese

notions of the importance of the PRC in world affairs. It would also help avoid the possibility of disruptive domestic political fallout in the United States on China policy. Another participant, expressing deep concern over the tendency to deal with the complexity of China policy through simplistic formulations of "friend" or "foe," warned of the danger of dealing with one extreme by moving to the other. In this regard, viewing China as a regional rather than a global power is probably a good idea if properly managed. It will not do, however, to move from the view of China as a major world power to the extreme of saying that the PRC is unimportant. This concern, a third participant responded, is not justified in terms of the dominant views within the Administration. The basic framework of the triangle concept, even if dropped rhetorically, still exists at the level of practical policy.

#### MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Despite the differences expressed by the attendees, all recognized the need to confront the practical problems of policy management and implementation. As one participant observed, not only is a complex and interactive policy of managing triangular relations with the Soviets and the Chinese difficult to explain to the American populace, but bureaucracies by their very nature deal with issues in a compartmented and case-by-case manner rather than in an interactive framework. Even if policymakers assert that the United States will deal with the PRC and the USSR on their separate merits, it was further argued, there is no escape from the interaction of these policies. Leaders in Moscow and Beijing both understand the security implications that attach to their relations with one another; because of their enduring rivalry, concern about the potential for conflict is never very far from either state's calculations. Such circumstances impart a "triangular" logic to American-Chinese-Soviet dealings, even if many deny the relevance of viewing the world in triangular terms. The essence of the triangular relationship remains the security interests of all three states and the leverage that the Sino-Soviet competition provides the United States.

In view of these considerations, several participants noted that the United States needs to guard against dealing with issues in an overly narrow context. For example, the practical impact on Beijing of

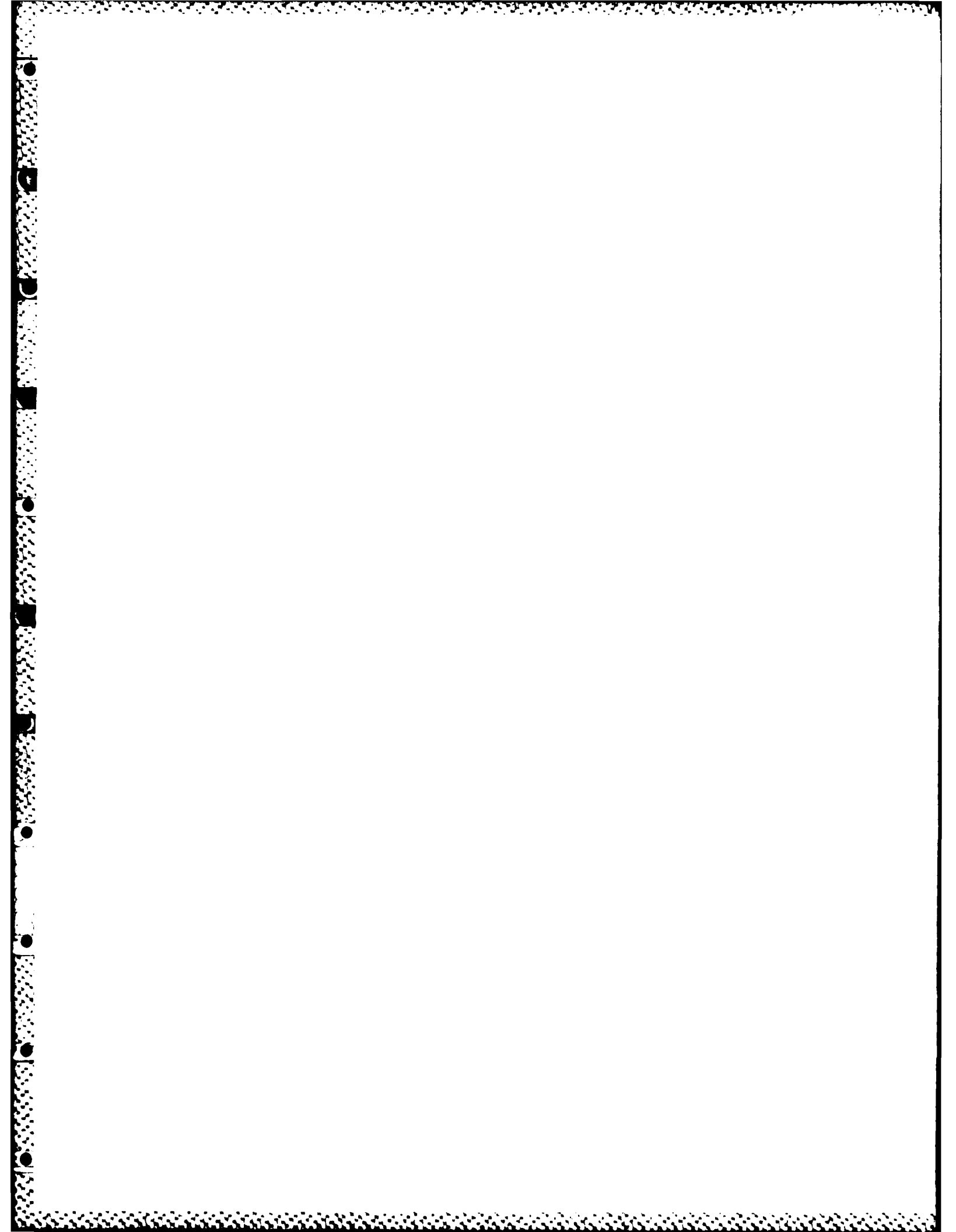
U.S. policies on technology transfer and on the SS-20 issue should not be overlooked. No dissents were registered from the view that U.S. China policy must be congruent with broader U.S. policy concerns, as well as with China's conception of its present strategic role. As one participant argued, rather than force the Chinese into the mold of a strategic ally of the United States, we should utilize China's own theme of its policy independence and focus on the longer-term implications of U.S. technological, economic, and scientific assistance for China. Such an approach could help speed up the implementation process with respect to technology transfer, without excessively injecting the security rationale into these decisions.

Another participant, however, noted that there continues to be a gap between theory and practice in China's national security strategy. Although the Chinese profess a belief in an independent stance between the two superpowers, in fact they continue to engage in a range of tacit or informal security dealings with the United States. Chinese cooperation with the United States in both Southwest Asia and Southeast Asia, as well as other bilateral dealings with the United States, belies Beijing's rhetoric of policy independence. Several participants stressed that we must explain to the Chinese that excessive public criticism of U.S. policy will undermine present widespread domestic public support for good relations with the PRC.

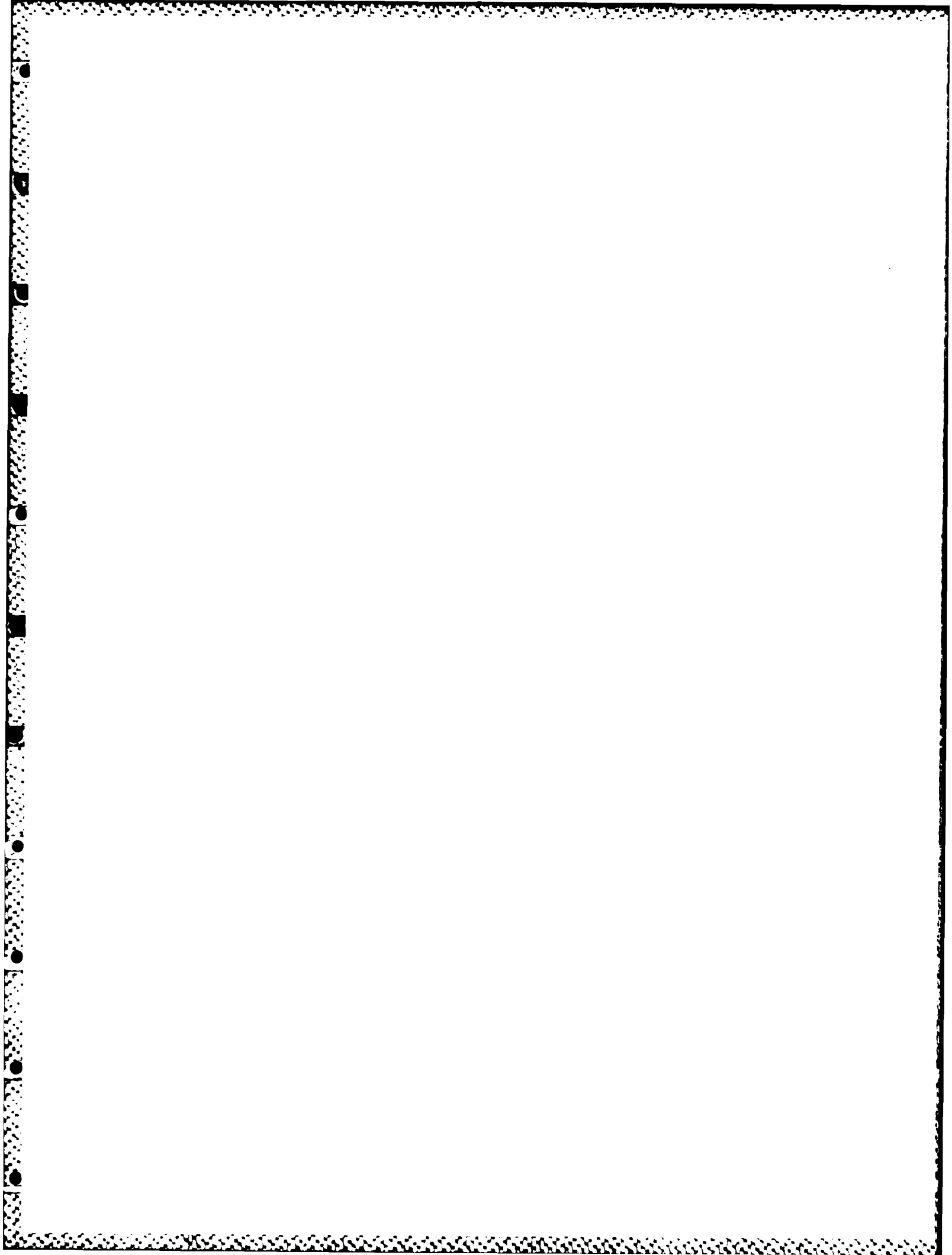
Such an approach, moreover, does not preclude reminders to the Chinese that the United States already "carries water" for the PRC. The SS-20 issue is an excellent example. The Chinese have indicated tacit support for U.S. policy on the INF issue, since they understand that the U.S. zero-option proposal implemented on a global basis clearly benefits their own security interests. Although it was generally felt that the SS-20 issue did not provide the United States sufficient leverage to return to a "swing" position in the triangle, it does present an opportunity for further building a security dialogue with China on matters of common interest.

Several participants concluded, however, that there is no assurance that the Chinese are prepared to collaborate in a visible way on such issues. During much of 1981 and 1982, the Chinese seemed to be actually looking for disagreements with the United States, even as they sought to

exempt their important economic and technological needs from their attacks on U.S. "hegemony." Yet it was felt that the U.S.-China relationship cannot survive and flourish solely on an economic basis, or with such a disparity between Chinese public attacks on U.S. foreign policy and the desire for economic cooperation. Reintroducing a limited but significant security component to the U.S.-PRC relationship, the participants felt, could help to stabilize and reestablish forward momentum in our bilateral ties and would lend greater predictability to the larger framework of U.S.-PRC-USSR interactions.



Appendix A  
DISCUSSION PAPERS





## SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

William G. Hyland

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

The Sino-Soviet alliance that emerged after the Chinese revolution rested on a very narrow basis. The 1950 alliance was more a matter of coincident strategic interests than ideological or political solidarity; future relations depended on building an ideological and political framework.

This did not happen, obviously. The Soviets became increasingly suspicious and apprehensive about Chinese political heresy and strategic ambitions. The result was that when the alliance was put to a severe test in late 1958, during the Taiwan Straits crisis, it virtually collapsed.

Soon thereafter, the Soviets halted aid to the Chinese nuclear program and pulled out Soviet economic technicians. This failure of state relations ended the first, or semi-cooperative, phase of the Sino-Soviet alliance.

The 1960s witnessed what was a logical continuation: the expansion of the dispute to party relations. At the same time the serious divergence in strategic outlook hardened, with the Chinese proclaiming the universal principles of Mao Zedong and, after the Cuban missile crisis, the Soviets trying to develop an accommodation with the imperialists. The Soviets pursued a policy of negotiation, with the test ban in 1963 and the NPT in 1968, on nuclear issues that had anti-Chinese overtones.

Even then, both sides seemed to harbor some residual hope that the dispute could be contained and perhaps mended; thus, after the overthrow of Khrushchev in 1964, Zhou Enlai sounded out the "new Czars," as the Chinese called them. This was only an interlude. The Soviets were moving, not toward even a limited accommodation, but toward outright confrontation with Beijing.

The watershed, of course, was the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Brezhnev doctrine, and the clashes on the Ussuri River. A genuine war scare followed, and for the first time, the Soviets hinted that they might want U.S. acquiescence in a strike against China (August 1968).

The emergence of the triangular relationship followed in 1970-1972. The U.S. gained a pivotal position, achieving closer relations with both Moscow and Peking than they had with each other--in short, a balance of power.

The Soviets were obviously caught unprepared for the U.S. opening to China, and thereafter they attempted to wean the U.S. away from its new course. Repeated direct and indirect offers were made for a U.S.-Soviet common front against China--especially against China as a nuclear power. These overtures occurred in (1) the SALT talks of 1971, an implicit offer to act against China under the guise of avoiding accidental war; (2) a draft of a blatantly anti-Chinese treaty on preventing nuclear war (first given to Nixon in May 1972); (3) an intriguing offer of an alliance against China, made to Kissinger in early 1973; (4) continued probing in 1973 for this result in the negotiations on the agreement to prevent nuclear war; (5) a frank discussion of the Chinese nuclear threat at the 1973 summit in San Clemente; (6) an offer of an anti-Chinese alliance made to Nixon in 1974 at the last summit; (7) the same offer repeated to Ford at Vladivostok; and finally, (8) the same offer revived for Carter in 1979 at the SALT signing in Vienna.

Yet it seems likely that the Soviet expectations of winning over the United States began to wane in the mid-1970s (ironically, as Sino-American relations were beginning to freeze). By the time of Mao's death, Soviet policy was less oriented toward persuading the United States of the Chinese danger (as Brezhnev had tried with Nixon) than of opening slightly toward China, by adopting a forward policy that threatened both American and Chinese interests, beginning with Angola (which Ford had indicated to the Chinese would be a test case for resisting Soviet hegemony, only to see that anti-Soviet effort collapse).

In 1977-1978, the Soviet offensive was spreading. It impinged on U.S. interests in the Gulf and the Horn of Africa, but also on Chinese interests in South Asia, particularly in the coup in Afghanistan in 1979 (Brzezinski admits that the U.S. failure to react was a "major setback"). But the real thrust was against China's southern flank: The Soviet-Vietnamese treaty of 1978 was the blank check for the invasion of Cambodia.

In retrospect, it seems that the apogee of triangular relations was reached at that time, when Deng Xiaoping asked for and received American support for an invasion of Vietnam and when the Soviets, confronted with a clear challenge, recoiled from military action. To be sure, for a time it seemed that Sino-American relations were normalized and that there was some hope that the U.S.-PRC relationship had moved beyond triangular power politics to near alignment (as reflected by the rather sentimental and naive hopes in the U.S. statement by Richard Holbrooke of June 4, 1980). If anything, the opposite was the trend.

The Soviets, sensing the failure of their policies toward China, either in pressuring Beijing, combining with the United States against it, or encircling China, gradually began to shift toward a diplomatic posture of careful probing for an accommodation; and the Chinese--first in 1979, then again in 1982--began to respond. This process continues, despite dubious prospects for success. So far, these exchanges have highlighted the scope of the conflict, rather than narrowing it.

Nevertheless, China and Russia are moving hesitantly toward a relationship somewhere between the alliance of 1950 and the deep split of the 1970s.

What historical lessons are suggested by this review?

1. The Sino-Soviet conflict remains a fundamental clash of power interests. It cannot truly be resolved as long as the Soviet Union feels compelled to contend for a position of influence in Asia and to protect its eastern flank with major military forces. A Sino-Soviet settlement in which Moscow gives Beijing a relatively free hand seems out of the question. A *modus vivendi*, however, is feasible.

2. On the other hand, neither China nor the United States has been able to go beyond a limited accommodation based on animosity toward Moscow.
3. The anti-Soviet coalition of the 1970s is losing much of its force; China now seeks a middle position.
4. Nevertheless, the United States will always enjoy a privileged position in the triangle because it can, if necessary, go farther in accommodating China and/or the USSR than either of the two communist powers can go toward accommodating the other.

## CHINA VIEWS THE STRATEGIC TRIANGLE, 1949-1983

Michel Oksenberg  
University of Michigan

### THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE: FOUR STAGES IN CHINESE POLICY 1946-1960: Lean Toward the Soviet Union

As the bipolar world took shape in the late 1940s, leaving little room for "neutralism," the Chinese had little realistic choice but to lean toward Moscow. Ideological affinity and the offer of economic assistance led the CCP toward Moscow, although the CCP Politburo apparently debated throughout the Civil War (1946-1949) how far to lean. The CCP leadership, in my opinion, never considered a genuine, constructive CCP relationship with the United States to be a viable option. They judged the United States to be essentially hostile or duplicitous; more important, the Politburo was spearheading a revolutionary movement determined to eliminate the positions of Western privilege and influence in China. In essence, then, with the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, Mao aligned China with the weaker power in the bipolar world, and Stalin's steep price for support of Mao in the 1950 Sino-Soviet treaty of alliance was to secure a Soviet presence in China and to enmesh China more fully in the Soviet security system than Mao probably would have wished. The Korean War and its legacy drove China more fully into Soviet clutches and locked the United States and China into an adversarial relationship with the reassertion of an American defense umbrella over Chiang Kai-shek.

By the mid-1950s, the limits of the Sino-Soviet alliance were reached. From 1954 through 1957, Khrushchev sought to placate the Chinese by canceling the joint stock companies Stalin had imposed on Mao, he promised to assist China in acquiring a nuclear capability, and he increased Soviet economic and technological assistance to China. Nonetheless, China refused to join COMECON and sought to improve relations with the United States in 1955-1956, an overture rebuffed by Dulles

Mao exhibited a determination to retain some independence in his foreign policy. Then, from 1956 through 1959, he focused on Khrushchev's perceived inadequacies: not consulting him in 1956 on de-Stalinization; seeking detente with the United States; providing military assistance to India; making supposedly unreasonable requests for a Soviet military presence in China; and reneging on the nuclear agreement.

Mao's testing of the Soviet relationship, accompanied by a growing personal animus between himself and Khrushchev, generated domestic opposition, although the extent and precise nature of the opposition remains unclear. But as early as late 1953, the party chieftain in Manchuria, Gao Gang, and many of his associates in the Northeast may have been removed, in part, for having too close connections with the Soviets. Minister of Defense Peng Dehuai almost certainly was also removed in part because of his consternation over Mao's conduct of Soviet policy.

#### **1960-1970: Mutual Hostility Toward Washington and Moscow**

By the early 1960s, China was locked into an adversarial relationship with both Washington and Moscow. The posture was largely of Mao's choosing, although it is quite likely that no Democratic administration would have noticed or responded to any Chinese overtures to improve relations. For a brief period in 1963-1964, from the signing of the limited Test Ban Treaty to the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, the prospect of a Soviet-American condominium against China loomed on the horizon, but this faded as the United States became involved in Vietnam. Chinese policy for much of the decade stressed self-reliance, fostering contacts with Western Europe and Japan, assisting revolutionary movements in countries hostile to China, and cultivating friendly relations with pliant third world states. The policy yielded little national security, and at the decade's end, China was isolated in world affairs, confronting an increasing Soviet military threat to the north and a limited American military engagement in Indochina. The Soviet Union had surpassed the United States as China's major threat.

### 1970-1980: Lean Toward the United States

In a classic balance-of-power move, China turned to the United States as a counterweight to the USSR and as a means for ending its international isolation. The move was made over considerable domestic opposition, particularly from Minister of Defense Lin Biao. By the mid-1970s, Mao's erstwhile radical supporters--his wife Jiang Qing and her associates--also criticized the opening to the West, which they saw as benefiting their opponents in the economic and foreign-affairs bureaucracies and endangering China's ideological purity. Critics of the "lean toward the United States" policy advocated a hostile posture toward both the United States and the USSR or a policy of some equidistance. The critics argued that Soviet-American relations were more characterized by "collusion" than "contention" and that China had little opportunity to manipulate those relations to their benefit.

Deng inherited Mao's policy. He rebuffed Soviet overtures in 1977 to initiate a dialogue and continued the American opening, calling for a "united front" among China, the United States, Japan, and Western Europe against the Soviet Union. Through his American opening, he hoped to secure national security advantages and access to U.S. capital and technology. Normalization in late 1978 also presented Deng with an opportunity to complicate Soviet-American relations, which were then headed toward a SALT agreement, and to obtain an added measure of security during his then-contemplated attack on Vietnam.

Throughout this period, the Chinese move toward the United States was made politically more palatable in Beijing by Washington's handling of the Taiwan issue. In reality, America's economic ties and arms sales to Taiwan increased even as Sino-American relations improved. Tensions in the Taiwan Strait diminished as China redeployed forces from the southeast coast toward first the Soviet Union and then Vietnam. Socially and culturally, the gap between Taiwan and the mainland grew in the 1970s, and the process of "Taiwanization"--Taiwanese assuming roles of greater political importance--gathered speed. U.S. diplomacy obscured these trends, as the United States severed formal diplomatic relations with the authorities on Taiwan, the government in Taipei lost international stature, and the U.S. recognized Taiwan as part of China.

China's accommodation to the realities of Taiwan's separate entity, in short, was matched by America's accommodation to the symbolic "oneness" of China. This helped keep the Taiwan issue and America policy from becoming contentious within the Politburo.

#### 1981- : The Search for a New Equilibrium

Several factors terminated the era of clearly tilting toward the United States. The Taiwan issue introduced--in part because the Reagan Administration sought to introduce--clarity into a situation best handled ambiguously. The Reagan rhetoric raised anew in Chinese eyes the question of whether the American intent was to detach Taiwan permanently from the mainland. Further, China saw that time might not be on its side, after Chiang Ching-kuo and others committed to "one China" passed from the scene. Also, the Soviet Union, mired in Poland, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and Cuba, was less immediately threatening to China. The Soviets by early 1982 were indicating renewed interest in improving relations with China. Further, Soviet-American tensions were high, with an attendant risk of China becoming inadvertently involved in a dispute not of its making. The Chinese had no fear of the United States and the USSR combining against them. There was greater room for maneuver, and less need of the United States than there had been in much of the 1970s.

Deng had also staked much on the U.S. relationship, and as he saw several expectations--some unrealistic--go unmet, he may have begun to harbor some personal bitterness toward the United States. Further, he was vulnerable to political charges at home because the normalization agreement was so clearly his.

For all these reasons, the Chinese began to alter somewhat their strategic posture--still seeking a closer relationship with the U.S. but simultaneously seeking to reduce tensions with Moscow and more jealously guarding their independence in world affairs. By late 1982, China was embarked on a search for a new equilibrium in its foreign policy.



## DETERMINANTS OF CHINA'S STRATEGIC POSTURE IN THE TRIANGLE

This brief and oversimplified account yields the following observations:

- China's policy is heavily shaped by the state of Soviet-American relations.
  - China most fears a Soviet-American condominium against it. Since 1970, it has sought to prevent such a condominium, when that fear has come to the fore, by strengthening its ties to the United States in hopes of complicating Soviet-American relations. Thus, both in 1971-1972 and 1978-1979, prospects of improved Soviet-American relations drove China toward the United States.
  - When Soviet-American relations plunge, China has distanced itself from both, as in 1961-1962 and more recently.
  - When the United States and the Soviets have a stable but basically hostile relationship, with no prospects for Soviet-American detente, China has tended to manipulate the tension to its benefit. This seems to be the best situation from a Chinese perspective.
  - When one of the powers seems genuinely threatening to China, the PRC Politburo is driven to seek the protection of the other power. At that point, the Chinese leaders demonstrate maximum flexibility on such issues as Taiwan or sovereignty in hosting foreign ventures, but the demonstration of flexibility becomes a subsequent, contentious political issue.
- Security considerations have been the primary factor in China's positioning within the triangle. Economic considerations are also important, but survival precedes growth in the Chinese calculus.
- The proper positioning of China in the triangle has continually been a divisive political issue, with the military particularly demonstrating sensitivity to the excessive defense burden the politicians place upon it, the inadequate resources given it

to meet the burden, and the unpatriotic compromises the political leaders make with foreign powers to reduce the burden. In short, the top political leaders appear to confront a professional military which is hard to please and is frequently critical of the current foreign-policy line. Beyond that, the leaders must placate nationalistic sentiments in dealing with the major powers.

- Rationality has not always prevailed in the Chinese calculus. The conduct of foreign policy, as with Chinese domestic politics, frequently becomes highly personalized. Mao and Deng have played inordinate roles in the shaping of China's posture, and the personal trust or animus they have harbored toward foreign leaders--Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Nixon, Kissinger, Carter, and now Reagan--has played a crucial role in the day-to-day management of affairs.

The text of this paper did not reveal the interplay among China, the USSR, and the United States. But the triangle cannot be understood solely from the vantage of one corner. Each side has continually overestimated its ability to manage the triangle, overestimated its leverage over the others, and underestimated the likely response of the others to its moves. (Sino-American relations in 1970-1973 are clearly the exception.)

Our brief narrative does not really illuminate another matter: China's self-confidence and capacity to chart a somewhat independent course have increased. To be sure, China's leaders remain aware of their military vulnerabilities. Nonetheless, the China of 1983 is not the China that Mao represented in Moscow in 1950 or that Kissinger found in July 1971. The underlying economic trends of China, the average economic growth, and particularly the growth in the industrial base, coupled with China's slowly increasing strategic capability, are gradually yielding increased power.

The Chinese, perhaps erroneously, may feel less immediate need for the protection they believed the Soviet Union offered in the 1950s or the United States offered in the 1970s. They have fostered sufficient ties with Japan, Western Europe, the developing world, and international organizations that the isolation of the 1960s is no longer a realistic possibility. In short, while there are lessons to be learned from history, China is also emerging into a new era. Beijing considers the United States and the Soviet Union as less threatening to it than they have been in the past, and China is now less dependent on the good will of either.

## THE STRATEGIC TRIANGLE: SINO-SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN THE 1980s

Seweryn Bialer

Research Institute on International Change  
Columbia University

For over two decades after Khrushchev discredited Stalin's legacy in 1956, Soviet leaders encountered the greatest risks and costs of communist encirclement in the third arc. Along thousands of miles of eastern and southeastern borders, vast quantities of men and materiel were fixed in varying degrees of readiness against the once loyal communist ally, while military planners were obliged to make complex preparations of war on two fronts. Since 1979, however, the virulence of the conflict between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China has been abating. Both sides have quietly, cautiously, and slowly moved toward normalization of state relations. Before long, if nothing like the shock of another Afghanistan intervenes, they will probably achieve a degree of rapprochement that would have appeared highly unlikely to most informed observers just a few years ago.

Signs of Sino-Soviet rapprochement proliferate. They recall the initial steps taken toward Sino-American reconciliation early in the 1970s. There are conversations among diplomats and exchanges of journalists, scholars, and athletes. There are the adjustments on both sides in ideological formulations of their respective interests. There is the scaling down of the propaganda war, with attendant alterations in the scope and focus of accusation. There are reevaluations of Western policies and restatements of the preconditions for serious negotiations. Some limited negotiations have started. If these signs have yet to produce striking results, the mood on both sides heralds major improvements in bilateral relations.

Soviet policies were decisive in creating the conflict, but Chinese intransigence during the Cultural Revolution and through the 1970s was decisive in bringing the relationship to a boiling point. Repeated

Soviet overtures for improving relations were rebuffed before and after Mao's death. The primary stimulus to this process of normalization has been the shifts in Chinese attitudes and policy orientations. The Chinese have publicly revised their ideological formulations. The United States has lately joined the excoriated Soviet Union as a "hegemonic" superpower. The Soviet party-state is characterized and criticized with less vituperation than before. Most important, the Chinese have gradually moderated their position on the three preconditions essential for serious negotiations and improved relations.

For some time, the Chinese had insisted on Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea, Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and Soviet reduction of forces on the Chinese border together with total withdrawal from Mongolia. Following two years of cautious modification, the Chinese position now appears to state that serious negotiations can begin if only the Soviet Union shows willingness to embark on the road to partial fulfillment of any of the preconditions. (Incidentally, extensive conversations with Chinese and Soviet officials suggest that the former place greater stress and expect greater success with regard to the first precondition, while the latter are more sanguine about some movement with regard to the third.)

Why has the PRC shifted its policy so considerably, especially in the last three years? The answers lie in the Chinese evaluation of their domestic situation, the balance within the Sino-Soviet-American relationship, and the accelerated process of Sino-Soviet rapprochement. Chinese leaders were embarrassed and affronted by America's handling of the Taiwan issue and especially by continued deliveries of advanced military equipment. They deplore the symbolic rather than the actual effect of Reagan's actions, however, since they realize that the United States has not fundamentally altered its China policy.

In addition, the Chinese are fearful of association with Reagan's policies in the third world. These policies can elicit only dismay from a power that applauds third world aspirations and seeks to lead their struggle.

Ironically, the consistent hard line maintained in American relations with the Soviet Union--a posture urged by the PRC in the past--now works to distance the Chinese from the United States. Reassured by Reagan's strong line against the Soviet Union, the PRC can relax its vigilant warnings about Soviet "hegemonism." Indeed, one can argue, it is an axiom that poor Soviet-American relations draw the Chinese toward the Soviet Union, while good Soviet-American relations draw them closer to the United States.

Difficulties encountered in implementing the ambitious program of reforms in China demand a greater concentration on domestic affairs and a greater need to minimize the danger from the Soviet Union. Of the "four modernizations," it should not be forgotten that the Chinese place military modernization last. The process of de-Maoization in China, the opening of contacts with the West, the difficulties in the industrial sector (especially the high level of unemployed youth), and the continued success with experimental economic policies (reminiscent of the 1920s in Russia) have visited on the Chinese with a vengeance the dilemma of tradeoffs between political interest and economic effectiveness so well-known in the history of other revolutionary regimes.

Abandonment of old slogans, devolution of economic power, re-evaluation of the past, and uncertain plans for the future all heighten the anxiety among leaders and bureaucracies that control will be lost over the population, particularly the youth and the intelligentsia. The leadership seeks more strenuously a new ideological compass by which to indoctrinate the population and strengthen authoritarian control. In this regard the West constitutes a greater danger than the Soviet Union, as the leadership acknowledged by terminating the short-lived "democracy" campaign. As a matter of fact, China is becoming more interested in certain phases of Soviet historical development. The process of post-Mao evolution has many elements in common with both the Soviet period of NEP and the post-Stalin experience.

If in the autumn of 1982 Soviet specialists were stressing the slowness of the reconciliation process and the unlikelihood that it would alter the basic shape of the strategic Soviet-Chinese-American triangle,

in the spring of 1983 they were arguing that the process would be quicker and broader than earlier anticipated. Some even spoke of improved relations at the party as well as the state level. Chinese specialists have consistently cautioned Westerners about underestimating the difficulties of the process and overestimating its likely extent. If the Chinese wished not to endanger their American connection, the Soviets wished to bring home the dangers of Reagan's policy toward the Soviet Union by flaunting the likely payoff of speedy and successful negotiations with the PRC. In fact, however, the movement toward normalization is taking place neither as fast as the Soviets would have us believe nor as slowly as the Chinese would have us believe.

Just as Western policymakers and analysts several years ago were prone to exaggerate the unalterability of Sino-Soviet tensions, they are now prone to exaggerate the likely consequences of the process of reconciliation and its susceptibility to Western and especially American influence. If one cannot predict the detailed progression of the Sino-Soviet rapprochement, one can be quite certain about its limits. Normalization will certainly end the reciprocal vilification in the press; stimulate scientific, educational, cultural, and athletic exchange; increase the communication of unclassified materials and facilitate the visits of journalists and economic experts; reduce the isolation of accredited diplomats; reinstate Chinese relations with pro-Moscow communist parties; and, more important, expand trade, perhaps even substantially. Quite possibly, the Sino-Soviet border dispute will be resolved by compromise. (The Soviets have, after all, vacated all islands in the Ussuri River with the exception of one opposite Khabarovsk.) Eventually, a Sino-Soviet agreement could produce mutual troop reductions along the border and possibly, if not probably, a non-aggression treaty might be signed.

The consequences of the normalization process should not be exaggerated, however. Normalization will bring no Sino-Soviet political or military alliance, not even detente. Nor will it bring restoration of friendly relations between the two communist parties. Normalization will lessen tensions, but it will not erase Chinese suspicions of Soviet hostility to Chinese ambitions. It will not deter Chinese efforts to reach agreement with Japan on issues of defense and trade. Finally, the

PRC will perpetuate Sino-Soviet tensions in the third world by opposing Soviet "hegemonist" expansion there.

Normalization of Sino-Soviet relations, however far and fast it develops, will not alter certain cardinal facts of the Sino-Soviet-American triangle. The Soviet Union and the PRC remain potential enemies whose security is measured only in relation to the adversary's weakness. The Soviet Union remains a present and future danger to China, while the Chinese will continue to fear little and gain much from a United States that remains hostile to the Soviet Union. Regardless of normalization, the Soviet Union aims to prevent or delay China's attainment of genuine great-power status. Prejudice and fear govern Soviet relations with a country that shares a border of 6000 km, contains the largest population in the world, and possesses the will and resources to reclaim its historic greatness. As long as the Soviet threat persists, the United States has no reason to oppose the growth of Chinese power and international stature, even if it has no enthusiasm for underwriting the Chinese process of modernization.

Normalization will not obviate the need to keep one-third of the Soviet armed forces and one-quarter of the Soviet rocket forces opposite China. Nor will it relieve Soviet military planners of the necessity to plan for two and a half wars and Soviet economic planners of the necessity to finance them. Nor will it facilitate the more central Soviet goals of destroying the Western alliance or restoring a semblance of detente with the United States.

Normalization will strengthen China's position in the strategic triangle, but it will not secure China a place equidistant from both partners. Given Chinese fears, needs, and interests, its position in the triangle will remain skewed in favor of the United States. Sino-American relations will remain closer than either Sino-Soviet or Soviet-American relations. The United States remains the pivotal country in the strategic triangle and derives more advantage therefrom than either of the other two powers. What China is now doing is simply trying to improve its position in the triangle without, at the same time, strengthening the Soviet position vis-a-vis the United States.



The content of the policy of both Andropov and Chernenko toward China in no way differs from that of Brezhnev in his last years. Current policy, however, exhibits a new urgency and flexibility that is rooted in the disintegration of Soviet-American detente, the threatening American military buildup, and the potentially greater Japanese military presence. If Soviet fears of encirclement subsided somewhat during the early 1970s, they surfaced again by the end of the decade. The Soviet Union began to see itself not only as the object of an unfriendly encirclement, both "capitalist" and "communist," it began to exaggerate the growth of both the Western and Eastern components of the encirclement. Andropov's energetic effort to break out of this acutely felt encirclement was his policy to divide the United States from its West European allies.

As for China, the pursuit of this new direction in foreign policy represents merely another, if significant, expression of how China's leaders regard their national interests. The process of normalization has an internal and profound dynamic, neither sparked nor guided to any real degree by the conduct of the United States. If Reagan's policies toward the PRC have had an impact on the direction of Sino-Soviet rapprochement, they certainly do not explain it. Former officials of the Carter Administration accuse Reagan of losing "our China card." They thereby perpetuate vain illusions and a shortsighted, manipulative approach to relations with China.<sup>1</sup> We would be well advised to forget

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<sup>1</sup> It is of interest here to include the private observations recently expressed to me by a high-level Soviet Sinologist: "It may be that American analysts, when delving into Chinese policy changes, may be making the same mistake we made in the 1940s when the Chinese revolution triumphed. We expected that China for many years would become a strategic ally of the Soviet Union in matters of foreign policy. We paid rather dearly for these hopes. They cost us a lot. Now, on another level, the United States has done more or less the same thing.

I remember how after Nixon's trip to China, especially in the mid-70s, the American press and American official circles took quite a favorable view of the high level of animosity against the Soviet Union. Everyone was saying these anti-Soviet feelings must be fostered and fanned. Peking must be helped, strengthened, this anti-Soviet animus must continue to be fostered in order to change the strategic balance on the planet. I think it was also a mistake for the United States to believe that China could become a long-term ally of the United States. I think a more realistic view on either side must convince us of one

about the "China card." We should be satisfied that there exists an independent China which by its very existence, its geographical location, its historical attitude toward Russia, its military power, and its experience with the Soviet leadership provides an important obstacle to the expansionist plan of our main adversary, the Soviet Union. Surely our policies toward China should embody this fact with greater comprehension, subtlety, and consistency than the Reagan Administration has demonstrated so far. But we should be aware that we can influence China's attitudes and actions only in a very limited way. The truth of the matter is, the United States never had a "China card" to lose.

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very important element: that on this globe a great power has appeared, with its own interests, with its own strategic considerations, which do not jibe with the national interests of either the United States or the USSR. At present we have a sort of bipolar idea that two great powers more or less guide the destiny of the world. This is true if you think of the balance of forces, but we should not forget that soon the Chinese leaders will burst upon the world arena as a third superpower. We may disagree as to whether that is possible soon or not. Whether China will achieve such power or not is another question. We may see it in our own way, but the fact that China wishes it is something else. This is the motive force of Chinese policy. This is why it has distanced itself from the United States and comes closer to us."

## CHINESE PERSPECTIVES ON THE TRIANGLE

Lucian W. Pye

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

### I. CHINA AND THE "LAWS" OF THE "BALANCE OF POWER"

- A. According to the classical balance of power concept, it was unnatural for the weakest power, i.e., the PRC, to be a fixed pole, and for the strongest power, i.e., the United States, to be the "swing" power, flexibly manipulating the other two poles against each other for its advantage.
- B. This "unnatural" situation was only possible because of the PRC's ideological rigidity in opposing Soviet "revisionism," and the Chinese propensity for hyperbole in describing the motives of enemies.
- C. As ideology has eroded, the realities of power are beginning to prevail. The United States and the USSR are becoming the two fixed poles, and it is increasingly in the PRC's interests to aspire to replace the United States as the "swing" power, with bilateral (and confidential) communications with the two superpowers (who are talking less with each other--but more than Beijing and Moscow did with each other in the old triangle).
- D. Hence the change in the PRC's position in the triangle reflects basic historical pulls and not just short-run reactions to the actions of Washington or Moscow. This at least is my perspective on the current changing scene.

### II. CONFRONTING THE SOVIETS WITH THREE (FLACCID) CONDITIONS

- A. The Chinese have publicized three "fundamental issues" on which the Soviets must give ground if there is to be an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations: the Soviets must withdraw from

Afghanistan, end support for the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea, and reduce their forces on the common border.

- B. The three issues are not insurmountable obstacles if for other reasons the negotiations can make progress. This is so because:
1. Afghanistan is a multinational problem, and there is no reason to suppose that Beijing should make a bigger sacrifice than other countries over it.
  2. Kampuchea comes closer to being a vital interest for Beijing; but precisely because Vietnam is a Chinese enemy, Beijing could wisely improve relations with Moscow in order to isolate Hanoi--much as Beijing earlier undercut and isolated Hanoi by its opening to Washington while American troops were still fighting in Vietnam. (Already by tempting Moscow into making exaggeratedly optimistic comments about the movement of Sino-Soviet secret negotiations, Beijing has fueled anxieties in Hanoi.)
  3. This leaves the bilateral issue of Soviet troops on the border as the only real problem; and since the Chinese have continued to publicize an inflated figure of "one million men on the border," they can at any time acknowledge the correct figure and thereby indicate even on this issue the prerequisite concession.
- C. No doubt as relations with Moscow improve, the Chinese will discover other, and possibly more troublesome, issues (such as the repositioning of SS-20s in Asia); and while they may tactically declare the problem to be governed by China's "unalterable principles," Beijing will in fact be more flexible. One needs to take with a grain of salt all Chinese proclamations of "unalterable principles," for they have a near-perfect record, if given enough time, of abandoning or modifying all such "principles." (In Chinese political culture, it is expected that everyone's objectives will change with circumstances, and hence, in contrast to American political culture, commitments to goals can be changed lightly.)

### III. THE CHINESE TORTURE TREATMENT OF WASHINGTON

- A. As China moves to be the flexible "swing" power in the triangle, it has heightened anxieties and self-criticism in Washington, which, for different reasons, can only delight all factions in Beijing. (American self-flagellation arises from the fantasy that fine calibrations in Washington's style can produce gross alterations in Beijing's actions--ah, if it were only true.)
- B. Two divisive "theories" for explaining increasing Chinese abrasiveness toward Washington and blandness with Moscow are:
  - 1. The Chinese are miffed by Washington's anti-PRC words and actions, including arms sales to Taiwan, high officials celebrating Double Ten, "unilateral" imposition of the textile quota, slow actions on high technology, asylum for Hu Na, and other acts which Beijing has officially declared to have "hurt the feelings of the Chinese people." (To underscore the sins of Washington, the added point is often made that these actions damage Deng Xiaoping and give vitality to his enemies--indeed, the imagery of a vulnerable Deng surrounded by know-nothing foes is a favorite theme Chinese officials like to whisper in American ears.)
  - 2. Or the Chinese are discovering their communism, including a desire to get along better with a not too threatening Moscow, and therefore they are having second thoughts about the merits of closer ties with Washington. (The added point is also sometimes made that the Chinese drift toward Moscow was launched by perceptions of American weaknesses, made worse by an American tendency to treat friends shabbily.)

- C. The debate about which theory is correct has exacerbated American anxieties and frustrations, heightening a perceived need to be gentle with, and upbeat about, Beijing--a response which Beijing welcomes but does not reciprocate. (Loosely described, advocates of the first theory are lowly figures in the American decisionmaking hierarchy; champions of the second are nearer the pinnacle; and a few observers of China and history see flaws in both. Which are you?)

#### IV. THE WORLD ACCORDING TO BEIJING

- A. China's strategic vision is profoundly colored by a state of sheepish hangover from years of intoxication with exaggerated rhetoric over an imminent threat from "hegemonists," particularly from the "more dangerous one."
1. Given their state of mind, it is understandable why Chinese officials increasingly become evasive when nostalgic Americans try to recapture the camaraderie of joint denouncing of the "Polar Bear." (Just as the Chinese reserve for themselves, and not for foreigners, the right to bewail their follies during the Cultural Revolution, so they don't care for others to remind them that not so long ago they were single-mindedly, and in retrospect foolishly, "digging tunnels deep" and making a theater of national defense.)
  2. Respect for historical accuracy requires the reminder that as early as 1973 Zhou Enlai was saying, "The Soviets are making a feint to the East in order to attack in the West." Hence, much of the rhetoric about the Soviet menace was directed less at self-haranguing and more at the need for others to be single-mindedly anti-Soviet.
- B. Paradoxically, the more the Chinese have abandoned Mao's vision of a threatening Soviet Union, the more their military planning extols self-reliance, an essential theme of supposedly outdated Maoism.

1. In spite of a decade of wooing by European arms salesmen, and an increasingly less timorous Washington about arms sales, the Chinese are becoming more set on developing alone their own military technology.
  2. The Chinese are less concerned with the dangers of provoking the USSR and more with the vulnerability inherent in having others control their military supplies.
  3. Yet in time the Chinese may change priorities and practices as they more vividly realize that they are falling further behind world standards in the military realm.
- C. In the meantime, although the world may be, as they say, ripe for turmoil, the Chinese view the problems of war--and the maintenance of peace--as lying with others, and therefore they can focus on the domestic tasks of modernization.
- D. Since in the Chinese mind it is possible to separate the issues of international security and domestic economic development, the Chinese also believe they can have their cake and eat it too as far as continuing to have access to American industry, technology, and training--even as they politically berate Washington. So far, all the complaints over Taiwan arms sales have not affected trade relations and have only marginally affected cultural exchanges, about which the Chinese in any case are ambivalent.
- E. The upcoming Deng Xiaoping succession problem will probably strengthen the Chinese inclination for better relations with Moscow, for at least two reasons:
1. Deng is not going to be satisfied with being known for trying merely to implement Zhou Enlai's vision for China, and therefore he will be increasingly tempted to make his own mark by gaining a "victory" from Moscow in making the USSR, at least in Chinese eyes, seem to admit fault for the prolonged dispute--much as Mao gained the same kind of "victory" by implying that the United States had been at fault for the decades of U.S.-China confrontations. Deng's love-hate relationship with with USSR (comparable to Mao's love-hate of the United States) could fuel such an ambition.

2. Deng's successor, especially if it is Hu Yaobang, will need a new basis for legitimacy beyond the benefits of compound interest in GNP growth. In particular, he will need to master the art of one-party rule over an ideologically cynical people--a form of statecraft about which Russian leaders have much to teach.

## V. PROBABLE CHINESE TACTICS IN THE NEW TRIANGLE

As the Chinese seek greater strategic flexibility we can expect that their maneuvering tactics will feature certain basic Chinese political styles and ploys, including the following:

1. *Shaming Others to Get One's Way.* Since Chinese are almost universally taught to do right by being humiliated for their mistakes, they believe that the natural thing to do to get others (i.e., Moscow or Washington) to do right, by Chinese lights, is to shame them. Chinese are also taught early that when they have done right and are mistreated, they can, and should, vent their grievances. Hence, we can expect the Chinese to be impervious to the risks of irritating others and of eroding sympathy for themselves by constantly carping at what Washington and Moscow have done.
2. *We Have Principles, You Have Interests.* The Chinese insist on claiming a monopoly of the high moral ground on all public issues, insisting that their policies are bound by "fundamental principles," while Moscow and Washington only have crass interests. (Sino-British negotiations about Hong Kong got off to a rocky start partly because Margaret Thatcher declared that China had a "material interest" in Hong Kong, while Britain had a "moral responsibility" for the Hong Kong people, a reversal of roles that irritated the Chinese.) The Chinese will constantly dress up their initial positions as though there were no room for compromise, with the expectation that the other side will always make the first concession.



3. *Objectives Change with the Circumstances.* Counter to the Chinese posturing about these "principles" is the Chinese rule that when circumstances change, it is only rational for all parties to also change their policies and their commitments. Once the logic of the situation has changed in Chinese eyes, they will abandon, without a trace of memory or awkward shame, their positions and arguments of yesterday. Indeed, the exaggerated degree of Chinese zig-zagging in all realms of policy stems in part from a lack of the inertia that other governments have as they seek to maintain images of constancy and the avoidance of blatant contradiction.
4. *Hosting, Yes; Wooing, No.* It will not be easy to calculate Beijing's sentiments for many reasons, not the least of which is that they are skilled at courtesy but inept at persuasion; they are masterful hosts (especially as it means they have the home court advantage), but they have no tradition of chivalry or courting and wooing. (Chinese instinctively equate persuasion with brow-beating.) Hence, both Americans and Russians may confuse the significance of ritualized courtesies and gauche proddings. Needless to say, the Chinese also relish the host's role because it obligates the visitor to characterize the meetings in positive terms, while the host can properly remain silent.
5. *Private Communications and Public Symbols.* American officials (paradoxically, for a democratic and antielitist people) tend to place great stock in the confidential remarks of foreign leaders while dismissing as "merely for public consumption" their public statements; in contrast, Chinese officials believe that private communication must mainly be tailored to the desired mood of the occasion, while public statements carry the code words of serious public discourse. (The Chinese, for example, cannot get it into their heads that the private reassurances of Reagan Administration officials should count for more than the President's public utterances, say, with respect to Taiwan.) The Chinese prefer their relative emphasis because, first, it makes easier the task of pleasing all foreign visiting leaders, and second, it allows them to derive gratification from their successful manipulation of

symbols--this is important because Chinese treat symbols as nearly coequal with reality. (The current Chinese preference for hyperbole over subtlety in manipulating symbols can be a source of confusion in the new triangle; for example, the Chinese practice of displaying displeasure by making the grand gesture of "cutting off" this or "terminating" that--things which turn out to have little substantive consequences--can cause Americans to conclude that when such displeasure is directed toward us, it means the Chinese are "signaling" feigned anger, but when it is directed toward the Russians, it must mean that the Chinese are truly angry.)

6. *Separate Spheres, Separate Policies.* In their more flexible role in the triangle, the Chinese are almost certain to exaggerate their propensity to allow different bureaucratic domains to have independent policies and approaches to the outside world. Whereas administrations in Washington (and Moscow) strive mightily to herd all parts of the U.S. government in well-coordinated support of current policies and wishfully hope that the private sector will fall in step, for the Chinese it is possible, indeed commonplace, for some levels of officialdom to adopt a chilling relationship to their foreign counterparts while other levels become more genial toward theirs. While politics may be "in command," trade and the search for technology, for example, can seemingly march to a different tune. Thus, ironically, the Chinese, who traditionally politicize all of life, now believe they can separate "politics" and "economic and technology," while Americans, who usually respect a separate sphere of politics, feel that the Chinese shouldn't be having it both ways, and politics should prevail.
7. *Simplistic Slogans Perceived as Grand Designs.* In Chinese culture, complex matters are conventionally simplified into aphorisms and slogans, which can be handily bantered about to allow those who repeat them to feel that they are engaged in weighty matters. When Chinese leaders, including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping, have practiced this convention with respect to the global political map, categorizing friends and foes and scoring advances and retreats, ebbs and flows, they have apparently awed otherwise sophisticated American visitors by causing them to believe that

behind the simplifications must lie a sense of geopolitical grand design. This technique of Chinese leaders is likely to cause both Americans and Russians to conclude that in the new triangle China has disproportionately great manipulative powers. This is particularly likely because the Chinese also tend to collapse the future into the present when talking about Chinese aspirations for power in world politics. Since China will eventually become a successful world power, why shouldn't she be treated as one today?

8. *Being a Friend Means Being Helpful.* Chinese tactics will be strongly colored by the Chinese view that a strong and rich "friend" should always be generous and supporting of the weaker and poorer partner. There are no clear limits to how much the dependent party can expect because, since the relationship is always unequal, there cannot be reciprocity in quids pro quo and the weaker and poorer can feel mistreated if the aid is not as bountiful as expected. (Americans who speak confidently of how China cannot go far toward improving relations with the USSR because of its "need" for our technology usually fail to go to the bottom line, as the Chinese instantly do, and ask how much are we ready to *give* of our technology.) The Chinese apparently appreciate more than either Washington or Moscow that there is a perverse logic to the dynamics of the new triangle: China lacks the power to tilt the balance, but the balance will be tilted by the one who can be most helpful to China--that is, by the one she befriends.
9. *The Supremacy of the Subjective.* In characterizing relationships, the Chinese are not averse to pointing to objective measurements if it serves their purposes, but, as the weakest power, they hold that the ultimate test of relations is entirely subjective. Thus they will completely ignore quantifiable statistics and declare on the basis of subjective readings that a particular relationship is "stagnating," "retrogressing," or "progressing only slowly." The periods when the Chinese have been fully satisfied with a relationship have been so brief that it is impossible to classify with any degree of accuracy their concept of a truly good relationship.

10. *Assuming Benefits from the Problems of Others.* In sizing up the other two actors in the triangle, the Chinese are certain to exaggerate the problems Washington and Moscow have in other areas and to inflate the degree to which China can benefit from their difficulties. American difficulties in Vietnam made them conclude that American power had precipitously declined, and now Soviet difficulties in pacifying Afghanistan have made the PLA supremely confident that they can handle a Soviet invasion of China. Since Chinese fault-finding of others employs criteria different from those used to evaluate Chinese performances, Chinese judgments about relative power can be rather idiosyncratic--a fact that is unhealthy for the smooth operations of a balance-of-power triangle which should be predicated on a shared sense of reality, especially in the domain of power.

## VI. THE DISTANT VIEW IS CLOUDED

- A. In the short run, China can expect that modest improvements in relations with Moscow, when combined with frequent scolding of Washington, will produce the maximum mix of beneficial responses from the two nations.
- B. The short run could extend into the long run, except for two uncertainties:
  1. Chinese tactics may backfire by eroding U.S. public sympathy.
  2. The United States and the USSR might move closer to a new version of detente, forcing Beijing to give up the comforts of equivocation.
- C. Should either or both happen, we would have to fall back on the Chinese adage that "Prediction is exceedingly difficult, especially with respect to the future."

## THE SINO-SOVIET RAPPROCHEMENT AND EUROPE

William E. Griffith

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Europe has rarely, always indirectly, and never decisively, been an important factor in, or been significantly influenced by, Sino-Soviet relations. It is not today, nor is it likely to be so in the near future.

In Eastern Europe, only three states, all peripheral to Moscow's self-perception of its vital security glacis, have been actively and independently involved in Sino-Soviet relations: Albania, Romania, and Yugoslavia. Albania escaped from Yugoslav to Soviet influence in 1948, from Soviet to Chinese influence in 1960, and from any foreign influence in 1971-1975. Albania's main foreign-policy concern is its fear of Yugoslav domination, and this has determined, and will continue to do so, its attitude toward Moscow, Beijing, and Washington.

Romania deviated from Soviet orthodoxy in 1964 but remained within the Warsaw Pact and CMEA. It has used Beijing, as it has Washington, Bonn, and Belgrade, to further its autonomy from Moscow, and it has from time to time tried to help improve Sino-Soviet relations. But it has never played a major role in them or in international politics in general, nor is it likely to do so.

Yugoslavia was the ostensible reason, as the United States was the real one, for the rise of Sino-Soviet tension in 1958. Beijing remained adamantly hostile to Belgrade (i.e., to Washington and Soviet-U.S. detente) until the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, whereupon it ceased attacking Belgrade, began attacking Hanoi for its support of the invasion, and thereby signaled its desire to improve relations with Washington.

Romania and Yugoslavia have recently been important in European communist party relations because of their support (more from Belgrade than from Bucharest) of the Italian and Spanish "Eurocommunist" parties in the latter's rekindled feud with Moscow. So, indeed, has Beijing, for it has reestablished party relations with the Yugoslav, Italian,

Spanish, and French communist parties. Beijing has done this because (1) its post-Mao leadership realized that Mao's attempt to split European communist parties had been a fiasco, and (2) Deng Xiaoping has wanted to support "Eurocommunist" autonomy against Soviet party hegemony. But, as Zhou Enlai once remarked apropos of Chinese aid to Yugoslavia, "far-away waters cannot put out fires." China is too far away and too weak to have more than peripheral influence on European communist politics.

Chinese policy toward Europe, as elsewhere, has become less ideological and more *realpolitik* than it was under Mao. This has not yet meant, however, that Chinese influence on non-communist European states has become significant, to say nothing of decisive. Nor is the contrary the case: European influence on China, and on the Soviet Union about China, has remained peripheral as well.

Fundamentally, this has been so, and seems likely to remain so, because Europe (except the Soviet Union) committed political and military suicide in the two world wars. Eastern Europe has little influence over the Soviet Union, and most of it is dominated by Moscow. Western Europe is militarily so weak, because it is disunited and lacking in the will to defend itself, that it is therefore dependent on the United States to prevent what would otherwise be its "self-Finlandization." In recent years, Soviet military power in Europe (notably the SS-20 deployment) has become so great that any West European temptation to "play the China card" against Moscow has been further eroded.<sup>1</sup> In short, as Henry Kissinger once (unwisely) put it, the West European states are "regional," not global powers. So is China. (Only the United States and the USSR, and to some extent France, are not.)

Two West European statesmen, however, thought that they might be able to profit from the Sino-Soviet split: de Gaulle and Adenauer. Both realized early on that the split was likely, for they thought in terms of *realpolitik*, not ideology. Both expected the Soviet Union to become so engaged with China that it would want detente on its western flank and would be prepared to pay a significant price for it.

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<sup>1</sup> Franz Josef Strauss is an exception; his CSU actively advocates "playing the China card." (See the recent CSU policy platform, in *Frankfurter Rundschau*, March 30, 1983, FBIS/WEur/March 31, 1983, J5-12.) It seems doubtful, however, that FRG foreign policy will go far in this direction.

They were right in anticipating that the split would occur and that Moscow would want detente to its west. But they were wrong in assuming that Moscow would pay any significant price to them, or indeed to their successors, for it. Moscow did not have to, for several reasons. First, the United States became bogged down in Vietnam and Watergate and for most of the 1970s was largely immobilized abroad. Second, de Gaulle's hopes were stymied by his own domestic problems, notably the Paris student revolt of May 1968, and by Moscow's preference for dealing with Bonn over dealing with Paris. Third, while it initially seemed to Brandt that the Soviet-West German treaty, the first step in his Ostpolitik, did mark a major Soviet concession in that it enabled Bonn to increase its influence in East Germany and thus, as he put it, "maintain the substance of the German nation," it is by now at least questionable whether it did not, rather, enable the Soviet Union to utilize its SS-20 buildup and the West German SPD and peace movement's opposition to U.S. INF deployment to influence West German politics, so that Moscow, not Bonn, has profited more.

Nevertheless, there has been a direct connection between Sino-Soviet and Soviet-West German policies. In March 1969, the Soviets and East Germans were harassing West German access to West Berlin (because West Germany was about to elect a new President there). Then the first Sino-Soviet border incident on the Ussuri River occurred. The next day, the Soviet and East German harassment ceased; and one week later, the Soviet Ambassador unprecedentedly briefed the West German Chancellor on the Soviet version of the Ussuri incident.

Moreover, the Sino-American rapprochement, which began in 1971 with Kissinger's first trip to Beijing, did restrain the Soviet Union somewhat, and thereby indirectly helped the West Europeans. Nevertheless, it occurred, without any previous or subsequent major European involvement. On the contrary, while it was going on, and primarily as a result of the increasing differences in the U.S. and West European reaction to Soviet advances in the third world (Angola, Ethiopia, Afghanistan), and then to Soviet involvement in the Polish crackdown, U.S.-West European differences became greater. The West European peace movement's opposition to INF deployment intensified these

trends, but the general trend toward conservatism in the UK, the FRG, and Italy, plus the French fear that the SPD was going neutralist and nationalist, reversed it, notably by the return to power of the CDU/CSU in Bonn. But Beijing played hardly any role in this at all.

We are now in the first stages of what may, but probably will not, become a significant Sino-Soviet rapprochement. I mean by that that although Sino-Soviet atmospheric tension has declined and is likely to continue to do so, and while some mutual troop withdrawals on the Sino-Soviet and Sino-Mongolian frontiers are possible, the most serious issues, Afghanistan, Mongolia, and Indochina, are unlikely to be compromised, nor is tension about them apt to decline significantly, in the near future.

Logically, however, this should lead, even if only atmospherically, to a greater Soviet threat to Western (and Eastern) Europe, since Moscow can be less concerned about Beijing and therefore less likely to want a quiet western flank.

However, another, more complex logic probably applies. Because of the massive Soviet SS-20 deployment, the lack to date of any U.S. response, and the peace movement's opposition to such a response, the Soviet Union probably still sees continuing opportunities for itself in Western Europe. Indeed, although Moscow probably expects INF deployment, it probably feels that in the struggle against it, peace movements will be institutionalized and intensified.

The newest, perhaps most important, and certainly most significant renewal of an "objective" relationship between Europe and the Far East, China and Japan, is the increasing Chinese and Japanese concern about the possibility of Moscow agreeing to INF limitation. While so far there is no indication of active opposition to this by European governments, and indeed deployment seems likely, it may become an issue between Western Europe and the Far East, and indeed between Western Europe and the United States. In any case, this does illustrate that military technological advances can objectively recouple Western Europe to the Far East, and thereby to Sino-Soviet relations.

So much for analysis of the situation. With respect to the views of West Europeans, their governments (although not most of even their politically conscious citizens), with the partial exception of the



French, do not yet seem overly aware of or concerned with recent Sino-Soviet and Sino-American developments. They are all opposed to the deterioration of Sino-American relations and ascribe this deterioration largely to the Reagan Administration's overly ideological and clumsy handling of the issues involved. They do not seem to expect a decisive Sino-Soviet rapprochement and are therefore not overly concerned about it. Above all, they have other priorities: economics, foreign trade, and INF. They are unlikely to be very enthusiastic about the United States coupling the European and East Asian aspects of INF. Their desires to sell arms to the Chinese are overwhelmingly economic. Since up to now the Sino-Soviet rapprochement has been primarily atmospheric, most West Europeans probably favor it on the ground that it makes a Sino-Soviet military conflict, with its unpredictable results, less likely. It may be that Moscow urged, and probably agreed to, the reestablishment of party relations by the French communist party with Beijing, but Moscow can hardly be in favor of their reestablishment with the Italian communists. In sum, Sino-Soviet and Sino-American relations are far away from Western Europe and on the back burner as far as most West European governments and peoples are concerned.

## ATTITUDES OF ASIAN STATES REGARDING DEVELOPMENTS IN SINO-SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS

Robert A. Scalapino  
University of California, Berkeley

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Inherently unstable nature of a triangular relationship.
- B. Complex nature of national, popular responses, and the interrelation of domestic and foreign policies.

### II. JAPAN

- A. A historic anti-Russian position, strengthened by concern over the steady increase of Soviet military power in northeast Asia, but tempered somewhat by a belief that direct Soviet attack on Japan is highly improbable.
  - 1. The legacy of Soviet policies of unalleviated harshness toward Japan. The large stick and small carrot.
  - 2. A balance sheet on Japanese-Soviet economic relations: current trends and future prospects for cooperation in Siberian economic development.
  - 3. Political and cultural factors in the Japanese-Soviet relation. The position of the Japanese "left."
  - 4. Japanese commitments in the strategic field, and their impact on relations with the USSR.
- B. Cultural affinities and economic opportunities conducive to a cooperative relationship with China, qualified by the latent concern over a strongly nationalist, relatively uncompromising China steadily augmenting its military power and posing increased economic competition.

1. Relatively high standing of China in Japanese public opinion, and absence of current issues posing major problems (yet examples of short-term controversies: Senkaku Islands, textbooks).
  2. From romanticism to realism in the economic arena. The hopes and concerns of the Japanese business community.
  3. Japanese politics and the China issue: the split within both conservative and "progressive" circles.
  4. A balance sheet on Japanese attitudes toward a possible limited rapprochement between the PRC and the USSR--how far should Sino-Soviet accommodation go?
- C. The critical relationship with the United States, and the effect of continuing tensions--an alliance or an alignment?
1. Earlier reservations about U.S. policies toward China and Russia--objections to the concept of a Sino-American-Japanese strategic entente.
  2. Support for American hard-line policies against the USSR--but resistance to a rapid movement toward high-risk policies. Nakasone--mainstream or deviant? Ally or Gaullist?
  3. The continuing debate in Japan over basic foreign policy: acceptance of a political-strategic role, regional and local, in alignment with the West versus continued attachment to an "omnidirectional" foreign policy involving minimal risks and commitments, and a separation of economics and politics.

### III. THE TWO KOREAS

- A. Attitudes and policies of South Korea--interests in improving relations with the PRC and the USSR while maintaining close ties with the United States and Japan.
1. The energetic but thus far futile effort to cultivate the major communist states--Pyongyang's veto power, hence the limits to economic and cultural relations with Beijing and Moscow.

2. The benefits and risks of limited Sino-Soviet rapprochement from the perspective of Seoul--a reduced need to compete for North Korean support versus a liberation of Chinese and Russian power in Northeast Asia for other purposes, and the possibility of collaboration in Korean policies.
  3. The implications of internal instability--North or South Korean--on Chinese and Soviet policies.
- B. Attitudes and policies of North Korea--the effort to bind Pyongyang's major allies to it firmly--yet reservations concerning both China and Russia, and the growing economic need to turn outward.
1. The success--and limitations--of "neutralism" between Beijing and Moscow.
  2. Economic problems and the need to combat obsolescence in economies of scale by tapping external technology and markets--yet the economic limitations and political risks posed.
  3. The DPRK benefits garnered from Sino-Soviet competition and the risks of rapprochement if advanced beyond a certain point.
  4. The possibilities of external intervention under conditions of internal cleavage.

#### IV. THE STATES OF INDOCHINA

- A. The central dilemma of Vietnam: historic commitments to hegemonism versus its strategic and economic costs.
1. The striking contrast with North Korea: alliance versus "nonalignment" and resulting internal tensions.
  2. Dependence upon Soviet power, hence, logical concern regarding shifts in Sino-Soviet relations--yet underlying nationalism and ultimate need for accommodation to China.
  3. Interest in, but obstacles to, the cultivation of support from Japan, the West, and the ASEAN states.

4. Hanoi's conflicting desires with respect to the United States.
- B. The dilemma of Cambodia and Laos: Is "independence" possible, and under what aegis? Parallels with Outer Mongolia.

## V. ASEAN

- A. A fragile unity, containing different emphases and perceptions of threat, varying with specific geopolitical and domestic circumstances.
  1. What is the immediate, middle-range, and long-term threat of China in Southeast Asia? Variant evaluations of the five ASEAN states.
  2. How seriously should one take Vietnam *cum* Soviet bloc as a basic threat to regional security?
  3. Is the United States credible as a countervailing power, and what role for Japan?
- B. What degree of rivalry or accommodation between and among the United States, the USSR, and the PRC serves ASEAN interests?

## VI. SUMMARY

- A. The Soviet threat: overwhelmingly military rather than political, economic or cultural--and the growing Asian response.
- B. The Chinese threat: the specter of a rising power, intensely nationalistic, reasserting historic claims as the Central Kingdom of Asia.
- C. The American threat: a fickle nation, cultivating commitments, hence risks, but lacking sufficient policy consistency or consensus to provide true assurance.

## MANAGING THE TRIANGLE: ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES FOR THE UNITED STATES

Arnold Horelick and Richard H. Solomon  
The Rand Corporation

### EVOLUTION OF A TRIANGULAR APPROACH

For nearly half a century--since the time of the German-Japanese "Axis"--the United States has faced the strategic problem of fighting or preparing for a two-front war. The Sino-Soviet alliance of 1950 sustained the sense of a two-front geopolitical as well as military challenge. A fundamental security concern of the United States and its allies is to prevent any one power from gaining control of the Eurasian landmass, from which American and allied interests could be threatened simultaneously at multiple points (Europe, the Persian Gulf, Northeast Asia).

Even in the 1960s, when the Sino-Soviet alliance broke down, Chinese hostility to the United States--and only a limited moderation of the Soviet-American Cold War--required U.S. security planners to continue to deal with a two-front challenge, despite the fact that Soviet and Chinese policies were no longer coordinated.

In the early 1970s, the United States began to see a significant interaction between its more flexible policy toward China and its dealings with the USSR. Soviet leaders initially sought U.S. acquiescence to their application of military pressure on the PRC, a situation that helped drive the Chinese to seek rapprochement with the United States. When the United States and China established their normalization dialogue in 1971, the Soviet Union accelerated its efforts to improve relations with the United States, in part to "outbid" the Chinese. Thus, during the 1971-1973 period, a "strategic triangle" developed in which the United States gained great flexibility and some leverage by occupying the swing position in its dealings with both the Soviet Union and China--and in which Moscow found itself confronted with a two-front challenge.

This triangular configuration among the major powers was altered after the mid-1970s as the U.S.-Soviet detente deteriorated and Moscow continued to threaten Chinese security interests (through the border buildup and pressures against the PRC in Indochina and Afghanistan). By 1980, there was a strong trend toward polarization as the United States and China moved in the direction of security collaboration against the Soviets.

After 1980, the character of the triangular relationship was altered again. The continuing deterioration of U.S.-Soviet relations, which had earlier spurred the U.S. tilt toward China, now reached a point where Moscow no longer saw Washington's China policy as restrained by a U.S. stake in maintaining good relations with the USSR (e.g., by completing arms control negotiations with the USSR). Soviet leaders therefore concentrated their efforts on improving the USSR's position in the triangle on the weaker member of the incipient U.S.-China coalition, the PRC.

Moreover, because of setbacks in Sino-American relations associated with Beijing's apprehensions about the attitudes of the new U.S. administration and its hardened line on the Taiwan question, the PRC became a more attractive target for Soviet diplomacy. The PRC, now reassured that U.S.-Soviet "collusion" was no longer a threat, and less fearful about coercive pressure from the Soviet Union at a time when U.S.-Soviet tensions were high, sought to benefit from the altered circumstances by improving its own position in the triangle. By reacting positively, though cautiously, to Moscow's renewed overtures for improved relations in 1982, Beijing began to explore the possibility of moving itself into the swing position in the triangle.

It is not at all certain, however, that the Chinese will succeed in their maneuver, or even persist in it. The Soviets may not be as responsive to Chinese conditions for normalization as Beijing may minimally require; and the Chinese are likely to continue to view the USSR as their primary and long-term security challenge.

With the triangular approach of the early 1970s now outmoded by both altered circumstances and different policy predispositions in Washington, there is at present a conceptual vacuum in U.S. approaches

to managing relations with the Soviets and the Chinese. Policies toward the two major communist powers proceed in parallel, without any evident coordination or conceptual purpose. There is no focal point of policy leadership within the U.S. government, nor is there an interagency coordination process which would give conceptual direction and help resolve the inevitable bureaucratic conflicts involved in policy implementation. This is particularly apparent regarding China policy, where until recently White House and State Department differences have been notably evident.

The present challenge to U.S. policy planners is in part conceptual and in part managerial: to fill the void of strategic policy and to develop greater coordination and purpose in policy implementation. The objective must be to manage relations with Moscow and Beijing so as to (1) avoid giving the two major communist powers incentives to move closer together (and thus to minimize the prospects of again facing a two-front strategic challenge), and (2) maximize the prospects of once again moving into a swing position between the Soviets and Chinese, from which the United States can exercise some additional constraint on the USSR and influence on the PRC.

## REGAINING U.S. FLEXIBILITY WITHIN THE STRATEGIC TRIANGLE

### A Restored U.S. Swing Role

For the United States, a swing role in the strategic triangle (i.e., one in which we have better relations with both the Soviets and the Chinese than they have with each other) is clearly the preferable position. But for the time being, it is beyond our capacity to restore ourselves to such a role unilaterally, at least at a cost we would be willing to bear. The Chinese wish to play the swing role themselves, and as the weakest party among the three it is most "natural" for them to do so (see the discussion paper by Lucian Pye). The Soviets, no doubt, covet such a role. But their competitive drive against U.S. interests will continue to undermine serious and lasting "detente"; and for similar reasons, it seems highly unlikely that Moscow will be able to go beyond a limited accommodation with Beijing. The Soviets



will not be able to construct better relations with both Washington and Beijing than the latter two have with each other.

U.S.-Soviet relations may improve somewhat as both superpowers seek to limit and manage the dangers in their intense competition. But the United States will hardly make concessions to Moscow to ameliorate Soviet-American relations just to improve Washington's position in the triangle vis-a-vis China. Moreover, improvements in Sino-Soviet relations could lead the USSR to harden its terms for improved relations with the United States.

A restored U.S. swing role presupposes not only some improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations, but also sustained and intense Sino-Soviet hostility, and neither Moscow nor Beijing has reason to oblige the United States in this regard. However, Sino-Soviet hostility may escalate again for other reasons. U.S. policy should position us to take advantage of such a development should it occur (as happened in 1969 and in 1979).

#### **Reversion to a Sino-American 'Anti-Soviet' Coalition**

Should tense U.S.-Soviet relations persist, and particularly if they deteriorate further, the United States might under certain circumstances wish to consider the alternative of moving again in the direction of a security coalition with the PRC along the lines of the incipient 1979-1980 Brzezinski/Brown approach. While the preconditions for this alternative are less complex than those for restoring the United States to the swing position in a 1971-1973 model triangle, the required developments are only marginally subject to U.S. influence:

- A Sino-Soviet crisis which rekindled Chinese fear of hostile Soviet intentions and restored Chinese interest in reinforcing the American connection in order to gain greater protection.
- A Chinese assessment that a "united front" or coalition with the United States would deter the Soviets more than it would provoke them, and that the United States could be counted on for effective support if that assessment proved wrong.

If it were feasible, a U.S.-Chinese security coalition could produce major benefits:

- If credible to the Soviets, it might induce in Moscow a more cautious assessment of the geopolitical balance and of future global trends.
- So long as the coalition endured, it would foreclose chances for a major Sino-Soviet rapprochement.

But feasibility aside, there are significant liabilities that may outweigh even these important advantages:

- Soviet fear of driving the PRC and the United States into an active security relationship may be a greater deterrent than the actual formation of such a coalition.
- China is too weak to contribute much military weight to such a coalition in the short run; but since the long-term implications for the USSR might be perceived to be grave, Soviet incentives to disrupt the coalition would be high, while its actual deterrent capability would still be limited.
- U.S. allies in both Asia and Europe might react negatively.
- Given radical differences in American and Chinese systems and values, an intimate security association might lack credibility, could be short-lived, and would be difficult to manage domestically in both countries.

### **Separate Tracks**

For the past few years--less, it appears, as a matter of deliberate choice than as a consequence of simultaneous deterioration in both Soviet-American and Sino-American relations--the United States has increasingly pursued its policies toward the USSR and the PRC on essentially separate tracks. There are some evident advantages to a separate-tracks approach that argue for making a virtue out of necessity:

- Barring a highly unlikely general settlement of Sino-Soviet security differences, the United States will continue in any case to be the passive beneficiary of Sino-Soviet tensions or estrangement.
- U.S. bilateral relations with the USSR and the PRC are more readily manageable on their respective merits.
- The risks of inadvertently provoking the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and of alienating the Chinese, on the other, by appearing to be excessively manipulative would be reduced. But the limitations of such a segmented policy approach are likely to be significant:
  - The U.S. capacity to reinforce Chinese incentives to resist either Soviet coercion or blandishments would decline.
  - The United States might eventually find itself the manipulated party in a reconfigured triangle with China in the pivotal role.
  - Absent an approach that related U.S.-China policy to the Soviet Union, the strategic rationale of U.S.-PRC relations might not be strong enough to withstand the inevitable bilateral strains in relations between Washington and Beijing.

#### **Toward an Improved U.S. Position**

If "triangularity" as an element in our approach to dealing with the Soviet Union is for the time being inactive (because of the high tension in U.S.-Soviet relations, difficulties in Sino-U.S. relations, and ongoing negotiations between the Soviet Union and the PRC), it nonetheless remains an indispensable dimension in our dealings with China. Recurring frictions with the Chinese over Taiwan, trade problems, cultural exchanges, etc., indicate that if there is to be stability in U.S.-PRC relations, the relationship must be anchored in a firm mutual understanding of shared strategic interests, i.e., in concern with resisting Soviet "hegemony." Absent such a mutual understanding, the Chinese will have little incentive to discipline their frustrations over Taiwan and other bilateral Sino-American problems.

Without a common Sino-American strategic perspective on containing Soviet power, there is not a sufficiently strong and stable basis on which to build a mutually advantageous long-term Sino-American relationship. Our values diverge too sharply, and our political, economic, and social systems do not easily mesh. Both China and the United States will prefer to play the swing role in the triangular relationship, and neither will be comfortable with the other in that role for long. Far less acceptable to either Beijing or Washington, however, would be a situation in which the USSR occupied the swing position.

From this perspective, the United States should strive to keep alive--even if for the time being in a passive mode--this overarching common Sino-American strategic interest in preventing the Soviet Union from acquiring such a preponderance of power that it could attack or coerce China without concern about a U.S. reaction, and vice versa.

In the meanwhile, the United States should position itself to take advantage of a not implausible (and beneficial) future evolution of current great-power relations: an eventual bottoming-out of U.S.-Soviet tensions; increasing Chinese frustration with Soviet unwillingness to pay any substantial price for an accommodation with the PRC; and continuing Chinese and American interest in managing their bilateral differences so as to preserve a latent strategic alignment. To this end, senior U.S. officials should indicate to their PRC counterparts that China does matter to the United States, both as a factor in maintaining global and Asian power balances that are in our mutual interest, and also--within limits that our systemic and cultural differences permit--in its own right as a valued political, economic, and cultural partner.

Taiwan will remain a source of friction and potential disruption in the U.S.-PRC relationship regardless of the character of U.S.-Chinese-Soviet triangular relations. How disruptive it will be will depend less on U.S.-Taiwan relations--although a high degree of discretion and finesse in managing our unofficial relations with Taiwan is the minimum requirement for any serious U.S. policy for dealing with Beijing--than on the larger context of U.S.-PRC relations. The less

value Beijing attaches to strategic cooperation with the United States, the more it will be preoccupied with the Taiwan issue.

How can we better demonstrate that China does matter?

- Our leaders can say so, more clearly and more often. The President and the Secretaries of State and Defense should articulate a broad conceptual perspective on U.S. foreign relations and defense policy which identifies the U.S.-PRC relationship as of major significance to the global balance and to regional stability in Asia.
- There needs to be a senior official in the Administration who is perceived as being committed to cultivating the relationship and in charge of China policy. Such an individual must have the conspicuous support of the White House. This is important in any administration, but particularly so in one that is perceived by the Chinese to have "pro-Taiwan" inclinations.
- U.S. concern for China's strategic interests should be authoritatively and visibly expressed as relevant circumstances arise (e.g., in connection with Soviet proposals to avert U.S. deployments of P2s and GLCMs to Europe by shifting up to one-third of Soviet SS-20s now targeted on Europe to the Far East, where they could strike Chinese targets).
- Regular senior-level consultations with PRC leaders (including Ambassador Zhang Wenjin) on global political and security issues should be reinstituted.
- Opportunities should be grasped to engage in genuine collaboration with the PRC on security issues where a significant Soviet or Soviet-backed challenge to joint interests makes such action desirable and politically possible--as in the cases of Afghanistan and Indochina.

An improved U.S. position in the triangular relationship requires a more complex and less implacably confrontational approach to the Soviet Union--which may, in any case, evolve in response to domestic demands

and the requirements of alliance cohesion. Our ability to affect Soviet behavior by operating in a triangular context depends on a Soviet perception that the United States and the PRC are capable of cooperating strategically against the USSR, but that the character and extent of that cooperation is a function of Soviet behavior.

We should avoid leading the Soviets to believe that the United States and the PRC are on an inexorably rising curve of security cooperation that will inevitably pose increasingly dangerous threats to the USSR regardless of Soviet behavior. Ideally, cooperative Sino-American relations should be designed and conducted to convey a set of clear messages to the USSR about the *stability* of the overall U.S.-PRC relationship, the *potential* for heightened security cooperation between the two countries in response to Soviet behavior threatening to U.S. and PRC interests, and the *disinclination* of the United States to move to high levels of security cooperation with the PRC absent such threatening Soviet behavior.

Appendix B

AGENDA FOR THE RAND WORKSHOP

MANAGING THE STRATEGIC TRIANGLE:  
Current Developments in Chinese and Soviet Foreign Policies  
and Their Implications for the United States

A Rand Workshop Organized for the  
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy  
Washington, D.C., May 5-6, 1983

Richard H. Solomon and Arnold L. Horelick, Co-Chairmen

THURSDAY, MAY 5

9:00-12:00 AM

Keynote Presentation: The Honorable Alexander M. Haig, Jr.

I. Evolution of the "Strategic Triangle": A Historical Assessment

Chairman: Richard H. Solomon

Discussion leaders: William G. Hyland Michel Oksenberg

12:30-2:00 PM

Lunch

2:00-5:00 PM

II. Current Dynamics of "The Triangle" and Prospects for U.S.-  
Soviet Relations

Chairman: Arnold L. Horelick

Discussion leaders: Seweryn Bialer Lucian W. Pye

6:30-9:30 PM

Reception and Working Dinner: The Metropolitan Club  
(1700 H Street, N.W.)

III. Allied Perspectives on Managing "The Triangle"

Chairman: James A. Thomson

Discussion Leaders: William E. Griffith      Robert A. Scalapino

FRIDAY, MAY 6

9:00-12:00 AM

IV. Alternative Strategies for the U.S. in Managing "The Triangle"

Chairman: Winston Lord

Discussion leaders: Arnold L. Horelick      Richard H. Solomon

12:30-1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30-3:00 PM

V. Summary Assessment: Current Trends and Future Prospects for  
"The Triangle" and U.S. Policy Options

Summarizer: Brent Scowcroft



Appendix C  
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Richard L. Armitage	Department of Defense
Jeremy Azrael	Department of State
R. Rand Beers	Department of State
Seweryn Bialer	Columbia University
Harold Brown	Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies
William A. Brown	Department of State
Richard A. Clarke	Department of State
Richard A. Davis	Department of State
Craig G. Dunkerley	Department of State
Paul Gardner	Department of State
Harry Gelman	The Rand Corporation
William H. Gleysteen, Jr.	The Asia Society
Donald Gregg	The White House
David D. Gries	National Intelligence Council
William E. Griffith	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Alexander M. Haig	Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute
Harry Harding	Stanford University
Arnold L. Horelick	The Rand Corporation
William G. Hyland	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Fred C. Ikle	Department of Defense
David N. Laux	National Security Council
Herbert Levin	National Intelligence Council
Norman D. Levin	The Rand Corporation

Winston Lord	Council on Foreign Relations
James R. Martin	Department of Defense
Mark Minton	Department of State
Larry C. Napper	Department of State
Michel Oksenberg	University of Michigan
Jonathan D. Pollack	The Rand Corporation
Lucian W. Pye	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Henry S. Rowen	National Intelligence Council
Robert A. Scalapino	University of California, Berkeley
Brent Scowcroft	International Six, Incorporated
Steven Sestanovich	Department of State
Gaston Sigur	National Security Council
Thomas W. Simons, Jr.	Department of State
Jon Smrtic	Department of State
Richard H. Solomon	The Rand Corporation
James A. Thomson	The Rand Corporation
Jerry D. Van Sickle	Department of Defense

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